

Bringing Hands Together Through Music:
Dick and Georgia Bassett and the
Association for Music in International Schools

By
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Abstract

The Association for Music in International Schools (AMIS) is an international music education organization that currently serves 93 international schools in 53 countries on five continents. AMIS supports the students, teachers, and music programs of its member schools through honor ensemble festivals, conferences, and workshops held at various locales across the world each year, with 21 events taking place throughout the 2017-2018 school year. Though the scope of the organization is global today, its roots can be traced back to the creation of a stand-alone Honor Band and Choir Festival at the American School of London (ASL) in 1975 that provided an honor ensemble experience for the top music students at international schools across the United Kingdom. This honor band and choir owed its existence to the two founders of the organization, Dick and Georgia Bassett.

The main goal of this research was to highlight the efforts of two remarkable, yet largely unknown, music educators who were integral to the advancement of western art music in international schools around the world. The research questions guiding this ethnographical account of the Bassetts' and AMIS were: (1) How did the Bassetts come about creating and growing the AMIS organization and, (2) how has that organization impacted music education world-wide for the last 42 years? The narrative was constructed through analysis of Mrs. Bassett's personal memoirs; extensive interviews with the Bassetts and current AMIS Executive Director, Keith Montgomery; informal interviews with AMIS teachers and festival conductors; AMIS Executive Council documents, including founding documents, board meeting minutes, and festival repertoire lists; and the discussions of AMIS teachers on the AMIS Music Educators' Facebook Page.

Mr. Bassett, an accomplished clarinetist, and Mrs. Bassett, a vocalist and violinist, met at Oberlin Conservatory, where they were studying to become music educators. The Bassetts'

participation in honor ensembles in their formative years and in the “Oberlin in Salzburg” program - a year-long study abroad experience for Oberlin music majors at the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg – provided the inspiration to look for opportunities for teaching overseas. “We were just sure we wanted to be different; to do something different” (Bassett G., Interview with author). Throughout their career, the Bassetts held teaching positions at the American Community School of Athens, Greece, the Community School in Tehran, Iraq, and ultimately in ASL in London, England, where the honor festivals began. Over the next twenty years, the festival grew in size and geographic scope, and other festivals were added to the calendar, as well. Officially founded in 1996, AMIS has continued to expand ever since to the global organization it is today. In 2014, the Bassetts officially retired from AMIS, but they still maintain active ties to the organization as consultants.

AMIS creates musical experiences in international schools that would otherwise be unavailable to them: a professional network for teachers, unique learning opportunities for music students, and the promotion of music and music education in international schools around the globe. Because of the Bassetts, AMIS “brings hands together through music” (ibid.).

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To my parents, Jeff and Liz, you gave me roots, and then you gave me wings. Thank you for always supporting my lofty dreams and outlandish adventures across the globe.

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Thank you to all of my AMIS colleagues that shared their stories with me. Your praises critiques of AMIS were the catalyst for this narrative. I would also like to acknowledge the hundreds, or possibly thousands, of AMIS stories that are not included in this document but are just as important to the organization's prosperity.

Finally, to Dick and Georgia Bassett, the protagonists of this story: Countless lives around the world have been touched by music because of your dream. None of this would have ever been possible without you. On behalf of the entire AMIS family, thank you for bringing us together through music.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1975, the American School of London (ASL) hosted an honor band event. The band consisted of 65 students from ASL and four of the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DODDS). The following year, an honor choir of similar nature was added to the event. These ensembles clearly served a need in the international school community; in the 42 years since the first honor band event, that experience has expanded into the Association for Music in International Schools (AMIS), an international music education organization that serves 93 member schools from 53 countries on five continents.¹ Students currently attending AMIS-affiliated schools have the opportunity to perform in at least one of the sixteen festivals happening all over the world during a school year.² These opportunities will increase in the 2017-2018 school year, as well. AMIS will be expanding its festival calendar to include festivals in Africa and South America for the first time.

These accomplishments raise a few initial questions: how and why was AMIS started, what has it done as an organization, how did it grow, and what lasting impact has it had on music education world-wide? A large part of the answers to these questions can be found in examining the lives of AMIS's founders: Dick and Georgia Bassett. Other parts can be answered by understanding the philosophy AMIS embraced: A family of teachers and students all around the world coming together to make "friends through music."³

¹ Association for Music in International Schools, "School Membership Application," accessed February 19, 2017, <http://amis-online.org/school-membership-application/>.

² Association for Music in International Schools, "Calendar of Events 2017-18," n.d.

³ Georgia Bassett and Richard Bassett, Interview with the author, November 19, 2016.

Organizational expansion also brings in new schools, and thus, new AMIS teachers who bring with them an ever-increasing number of opinions and ideas of how AMIS should be run. As the AMIS family grows, the teachers within the organization and the organization, collectively, need to have a common understanding of whom AMIS serves and whom it does not serve. Heller defends that “history helps human beings understand the past, function in the present, and prepare for (but not predict) the future,”⁴ a rationale echoed in McCarthy’s writing:

Historical knowledge can deepen understanding of the past, develop self-knowledge in the individual music educator and the profession, and serve to inform present problems with the wisdom gained from past experience. It can foster community, identity, and continuity.”⁵

There is no literature regarding the history of AMIS other than the personal accounts written by Mrs. Bassett. Through informal conversations with AMIS teachers at the 2016 Music Educators’ Conference, I learned that many teachers had only vague ideas of the association’s history. People generally knew the Bassetts were the founders of the organization and could name a few other teachers that had been involved with AMIS for many years, but most had no awareness of the Bassetts’ biographies or how their efforts have shaped AMIS into the global organization it is today.

The main purpose of this research was to examine the efforts of two remarkable, yet largely unknown, music educators who were integral to the advancement of western art music in international schools around the world. The research questions guiding this ethnographical

⁴ George N. Heller, “Historical Research in Music Education: Definitions and Defenses,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 6, no. 2 (1998): 77–89.

⁵ Marie McCarthy, “Historical Inquiry: Getting Inside the Process,” in *Inquiry in Music Education: Concepts and Methods for the Beginning Researcher*, by Hildegard C. Froehlich and Carol Frierson-Campbell (New York ; London: Routledge, 2013).

account of the Bassetts' and AMIS were: (1) How did the Bassetts come about creating and growing the AMIS organization and, (2) how has that organization impacted music education world-wide for the last 42 years? The narrative was constructed through analysis of Mrs. Bassett's personal memoirs; extensive interviews with the Bassetts and current AMIS Executive Director, Keith Montgomery; informal interviews with AMIS teachers and festival conductors; AMIS Executive Council documents, including founding documents, board meeting minutes, and festival repertoire lists; and the discussions of AMIS teachers on the AMIS Music Educators' Facebook Page.

Chapter 2: Related literature

The purpose of this chapter is to provide examine relevant literature and provide a theoretical framework through which to explain and analyze the narrative of the Bassetts' lives. I will examine international education from philosophical and historical viewpoints, highlight issues common to international schools, and discuss previous research on international music education and honor ensembles similar to AMIS festivals.

Defining International Education

Since this study specifically concerns music programs in international schools, it is important to consider what an “international school” is. Hayden and Thompson believe, “The concept of ‘international education’ is a well-used one, both in common vocabulary and in educational discourse. It is not, however, well defined.”⁶ Marshall inserts international education as one in “a sea of seemingly similar terms...in the big terminology debate,” aligning it with terms like global, multicultural, cross-cultural, developmental, and comparative education.⁷ The ambiguity of these definitions has been debated in multiple educational societies around the world.⁸

⁶ Mary Hayden and Jeff Thomspson, “International Schools and International Education: A Relationship Reviewed,” *Oxford Review of Education* 21, no. 3 (September 1995): 327.

⁷ Harriet Marshall, “The Global Education Terminology Debate: Exploring Some of the Issues,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Research in International Education*, ed. M. C. Hayden, Jack Levy, and J. J. Thompson, 2007, 38–50.

⁸ Mark Bray, “International and Comparative Education: Boundaries, Ambiguities and Synergies,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Research in International Education*, ed. M. C. Hayden, Jack Levy, and J. J. Thompson, 2007, 38–50.

In his accounts of the international education movement, Sylvester cites Butts' historical context for international education in his argument. Butts notes, "international education did not appear until modern nation-states did; therefore, the term more usually refers to the educational relations among nation-states from the sixteenth century onward."⁹ Given this context, Sylvester traces the origins of international education back to John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), "a Moravian bishop who...proposed the establishment of a 'Pansophic College' where learned men from the nations of the world would collect and unify existing knowledge towards international understanding."¹⁰ Refuting further the case for international education being a 20th century invention, Sylvester evidences the 1880 International Conference on Primary Teaching and the 1893 World Congress of Education in Chicago, among others, as Victorian-era movements that sought to create an international system of education.¹¹ Scalon notes that these movements grew under tension against the contemporary national school movement:

In an era of provincial loyalties, they argued for loyalty to mankind. And in an era of mass education for patriotism, they contended that the school was the only agency capable of advancing education across national boundaries.¹²

In the 20th century, especially after World War II, there have been numerous descriptions and definitions of international education. Sylvester, tracing the international education

⁹ R. F. Butts, "International Education: Overview," *The Encyclopedia of Education*, 1971, 164–71.

¹⁰ R. Sylvester, "Mapping International Education: A Historical Survey 1893-1944," *Journal of Research in International Education* 1, no. 1 (September 1, 2002): 90–125, <https://doi.org/10.1177/147524090211005>.

¹¹ Sylvester.

¹² David G. Scalon, *International Education: A Documentary History*, 5 (Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University New York, 1960), <http://library.wur.nl/WebQuery/clc/306498>.

movement over a 105-year period, created a matrix (Figure 1) illustrating “the depth and range of the lineage as well as the complexity of the territory which is claimed for international education.”¹³

		Politically Sensitive			
League of Nations (1922)				Mestenhauser (1998)	
		Butts (1971)		Murray (1929)	
		Vestal (1994)		Husen (1985)	
Shane (1969)				Spring Grove School (1866 est.)	
				Scanlon and Shields (1968)	
Sainsbury (1923)				International Baccalaureate Organization (1963 est.)	
		World Federation of Education Associations (1923)		Gutek (1993) Herman- Jordan Plan (1932)	
Prescott (1930)		Boulding (1968)		Kenworthy (1947, 1951)	
UNESCO (1974)		Brickman (1950)		College Cevenol (1938 est.)	
Education for International Understanding					Education for World Citizenship
Smith and Crayton (1929)		Kandel (1937, 1952, 1955, 1957)		Kemeny (1901,1914)	
Thomas (1923)		Ginn (1914)		Ecolint (1924 est.)	
		Becker (1969)		King (1971)	
				Comenius (Unesco 1957)	
		Mattem (1991)		Santinikentan / Visva- Bharati (1921 est.)	
		Hayden and Thompson (1998)		Anderson and Becker (1976)	
		Hanvey (1982)		Andrews (1908)	
				Ecole D'Humanite (1937 est)	
				Pike and Selby (1988)	
				Leach (1969)	
				Heater (1992, 1996)	
		Politically Neutral			

Figure 1 Sylvester's matrix mapping of international education definitions.¹⁴

¹³ Robert Sylvester, “Further Mapping of the Territory of International Education in the 20th Century (1944-1969),” *Journal of Research in International Education* 2, no. 2 (August 1, 2003): 185–204, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14752409030022004>.

¹⁴ Sylvester.

Hayden believes that, while the term “international school” fits within the context of international education, the two terms should not be considered interchangeable.¹⁵ Citing her own previous research, she argues that there can be a distinct difference between the location of the school (whether it is in a student’s home country or not) and the educational approach (a truly “international” approach or a “Western” education approach) a school implements.¹⁶ Even though these two terms are not consistently defined, there are still organizations dedicated to the furtherance of both. The Council of International Schools (CIS), a leading organization in international school accreditation, currently has a membership of 711 schools and 512 colleges and universities representing 112 countries.¹⁷ They do not define an international school based on factors such as school demographics, size, or location. Membership in and accreditation by CIS is based on the mission, vision, values of a school, as well as the educational programs a school provides.¹⁸

Like other organizations that aim to support international schools, AMIS has had its own debates about what makes a school “international.” As a part of the description of who can audition for its honor festivals, AMIS provides this definition of what an international school is to them: “AMIS Festivals support the music programs in schools *whose primary purpose is to*

¹⁵ Mary Hayden, *Introduction to International Education: International Schools and Their Communities* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2006).

¹⁶ Hayden.

¹⁷ Council of International Schools, “CIS | International Education Organisations,” accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=1799>.

¹⁸ It should be noted that CIS and AMIS are independent organizations, and membership to each is independent of the other. Council of International Schools, “Council of International Schools (CIS): Characteristics of an Accredited School,” accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=1912>.

serve expatriate children in various world locales [emphasis added].”¹⁹ Mr. Montgomery explained that the definition became necessary in the late 1990s when it was trendy for schools to add the word to their name, and some schools were calling themselves international “simply because they offered the International Baccalaureate Diploma.”²⁰

A Brief History of International Schools

Given the ambiguity of the terms “international school” and “international education,” the historical origins of international schools are unclear and often debated. Ian Hill, former Deputy Director General of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Organization, reports that 1924 is typically regarded as the historical starting point for international schools, the year the International School in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Yokohama International School in Japan were founded.²¹ However, Sylvester argues that there were at least four significant, albeit idiosyncratic, attempts at international schooling before the opening of the schools in Geneva and Yokohama, ultimately crediting the International College at Spring Grove in London, open from 1866-1889, with the title of the “first” international school.²²

Regardless of which school is deemed to be the “first” international school, the movement clearly caught on after World War II and has continued to gain popularity as

¹⁹ Association for Music in International Schools, “High School Band / Symphony Orchestra Auditions,” accessed April 26, 2017, <http://amis-online.org/auditions/high-school-band-auditions-4/>.

²⁰ Keith Montgomery, Interview with the author, Skype, February 12, 2017.

²¹ Ian Hill, “Early Stirrings: The Beginnings of the International Education Movement,” *The International Schools Journal* 20, no. 2 (April 2001): 11–22.

²² Robert Sylvester, “The ‘First’ International School,” in *International Education in Practice: Dimensions for National & International Schools*, ed. Mary Hayden et. al (London: Kogan Page; Stylus Pub, 2002), 3–17., 2,

technological advances, global organizations, and companies have caused significant increases in global migration. By 1964, the Yearbook of Education reported that there were around 50 international schools worldwide.²³ The International Baccalaureate, a leading organization in international curriculum, was founded in 1968 at the International School of Geneva.²⁴ Since its inception, the organization has strived to “develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” by developing “challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment”²⁵ The IB currently has 4,583 member-schools, called IB World Schools.²⁶

Today, many international schools offer classes in a variety of languages, but English is the prevailing language of instruction. The 2016 ISC Research Global Report stated that “the number of English-medium K-12 schools has increased by 41.5% in the past five years to a current total of 8,257, and the number of students attending international schools is now over 4.3 million; a 45.9% growth in just five years.”²⁷ Hayden believes that the staggering growth in English-medium schools likely stems from an increasing number of international schools of a

²³ George ZF Bereday and Joseph Albert Lauwerys, *Education and International Life* (University of London Institute of Education and Teachers College, Columbia University, by Evan Bros., 1964).

²⁴ International Baccalaureate, “About the IB,” International Baccalaureate®, accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/>.

²⁵ International Baccalaureate, “Mission,” International Baccalaureate®, accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/mission/>.

²⁶ International Baccalaureate, “Facts and Figures,” International Baccalaureate®, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/facts-and-figures/>.

²⁷ International School Consultancy, “Increasing Global Demand for English-Medium K-12 Education,” The International School Consultancy, July 2016, <http://www.iscresearch.com/information/isc-news.aspx>.

different nature than mentioned before – those that have opened to cater largely to affluent host country nationals who seek a competitive edge for their children.²⁸ While this may be one reason, the largest contributing factor to the growth of international schools may be increased global mobility. The United Nations reported that there were 244 million international migrants in 2015, a number that rose by over 91 million, or by 60 percent, between 1990 and 2015.²⁹

International School Characteristics and Dynamics

A stance on the definition of an “international school” is necessary to provide scope for the subsequent review of literature and the body of the narrative. The AMIS definition of an international school – a school whose primary purpose is to serve expatriate children in various world locales³⁰ – will be the operational definition of an international school henceforth. The international schools that fall under this definition have “their origins in an educational need perceived by globally-mobile professional parents situated temporarily in a location away from their home context.”³¹ English is the predominant language of instruction at most of these international schools, so the curricula tend to be built from British or American curricular

²⁸ Mary Hayden, “Transnational Spaces of Education: The Growth of the International School Sector,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 9, no. 2 (June 2011): 211–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2011.577203>.

²⁹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “International Migration Report 2015,” September 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015.pdf>.

³⁰ Association for Music in International Schools, “High School Band / Symphony Orchestra Auditions.”

³¹ Mary Hayden and John Jeffrey Thompson, *International Schools: Growth and Influence* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Paris, 2008), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/J_Thompson7/publication/44839571_International_schools_growth_and_influence/links/568d324508aef987e565dd86.pdf.

models.³² Hayden and Thompson also believe that there are four areas where international schools “clearly are distinctive when compared to national schools:”

1. *Curriculum*: they invariably offer a curriculum that is other than that of the host country in which the school is located.
2. *Students*: their students are frequently non-nationals of the host country (though more recently, increasing numbers of such schools in some countries are catering largely to children of affluent host country families).
3. *Teachers and administrators*: they tend, in many cases, to be staffed by relatively large numbers of expatriate teachers and administrators.
4. *Management, leadership and governance*: the status of a school within the host country and local context, the curriculum offered and the nature of their student and teacher populations [in contrast to host country schools] raise particular issues for international schools in these areas.³³

One major challenge in these schools is dealing with transitions. As students leave one school and enter another, they usually have to adjust to life in a new country or culture as well as a new school. This transition often causes a significant emotional strain on students. Recent research has shown that there is a high amount of transition in international schools for not only students, but teachers and administrators as well.³⁴ Bates provides a table (shown in Figure 2)

³² Catherine Bennett Walling, “Secondary Choral Directors’ Multicultural Teaching Practices, Attitudes and Experiences in International Schools,” *International Journal of Music Education* 34, no. 2 (May 1, 2016): 196–207, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761415584301>.

³³ Hayden and Thompson, *International Schools*, 28.

³⁴ J. Benson, “An Investigation of Chief Administrator Turnover in International Schools,” *Journal of Research in International Education* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 2011): 87–103, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240911398779>; Steven V. Mancuso, Laura Roberts, and George P. White, “Teacher Retention in International Schools: The Key Role of School Leadership,” *Journal of Research in International Education* 9, no. 3 (December 2010): 306–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240910388928>.

U-curve model ^a	W-curve model ^b	Intercultural literacy ^c	Transition cycle ^d
		Intercultural level	Involvement stage
		Bicultural or transcultural Unconsciously competent	Community connection Present moment considered ideal Leaving stage
			Impending move Loosens ties Denial of grief Disappointment Elevated anticipation Transition stage
Stage 1	Stage 1	Monocultural Level 1 or 2	
Initial enthusiasm Spectator Forming impressions Limited interaction	Highly elated Excitement Knowledge of customs Focus on cultural similarities	Unconsciously competent Limited awareness or chaos/withdrawal Unconsciously incompetent Naive awareness	Leaves community Family dysfunction Sense of panic
Stage 2	Stage 2	Monocultural Level 3	
Disenchantment Knowledge of host culture Inability to communicate	Period of crisis Cultural differences Threatened Self-security	Engagement Distancing Consciously incompetent	
Stage 3	Stage 3		Entering stage
Period of recovery Subtle cultural cues Development of language	Period of gradual recovery Understands cultural cues Makes friends Improved adjustment		Chaos ends Vulnerability Begins to learn norms Emotions fluctuate Excited or uncertain Mentor suggested
	Stage 4	Crosscultural level	Reinvolvement
	Near or complete recovery Accepts host culture More complete understanding Ability to cope with stress Biculturalism	Emerging intercultural literacy Consciously competent	Comfortable and settled Understands norms Predictability Involvement

Notes: ^aLysgaard (1955); Sewel and Davidson (1956); ^bGullahorn and Gullahorn (1963, 1966); ^cHeyward (2002); ^dPollock and Van Reken (2009).

Figure 2. Bates' comparison of Transition Theories³⁵

that outlines and compares the popular models of transition theory, which are theories that “describe chronological stages of emotional adaptation to cultural or international movement.”³⁶

While these theories refer more generally to a person’s response to a new culture rather than to a new school, they apply to most people involved in these schools. Extensive sociological

³⁵ Jessica Bates, “Administrator Perceptions of Transition Programs in International Secondary Schools,” *Journal of Research in International Education* 12, no. 1 (April 1, 2013): 89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240913478078>.

³⁶ Bates, “Administrator Perceptions of Transition Programs in International Secondary Schools.”

research has analyzed how living abroad specifically affects a child's development. These children have even been given their own term and classification by sociologist David Pollock: Third-Culture Kid (TCK). A TCK is "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents' culture."³⁷ McNulty and Carter argue that "a specialized set of professional skills and competencies [is needed] to effectively cater for the specific needs of TCKs," but found in their survey of three international schools in Singapore and Shanghai that this specific professional development was non-existent.³⁸ Heyward believes the problem should be tackled by the school as a whole; he states that international schools are in a unique position to aid in these transitions by developing "intercultural literacy" in their students, "Not only can they do so – but they should."³⁹

While there still is not a clear consensus on what term to use, the sentiment to create a school environment that cultivates some type of intercultural understanding is shared by many international educators.⁴⁰ One way international schools try to address intercultural

³⁷ David C. Pollock, Ruth E. Van Reken, and Georg Pflüger, *Third Culture Kids* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing London, 2009), <http://www.newhousesonline.com/newsletterarchive/NewhousePrayerLetterJuly%202010web.pdf>.

³⁸ Y. McNulty and M. Carter, "Do International School Staff Receive Professional Development Training about Third Culture Kids (TCKs)? Perspectives from Faculty and Parents," *The Routledge Handbook on Schools and Schooling in Asia*. Oxon, UK: Routledge (FORTHCOMING), 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Yvonne_Mcnulty3/publication/308693236_Do_international_school_staff_receive_professional_development_training_about_third_culture_kids_TCKs_Perspectives_from_faculty_and_parents/links/57eb4edc08ae91a0c8d3fb1a.pdf.

³⁹ Mark Heyward, "From International to Intercultural: Redefining the International School for a Globalized World," *Journal of Research in International Education* 1, no. 1 (September 1, 2002): 9–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/147524090211002>.

⁴⁰ Rebecca L. Duckworth, Lynn Walker Levy, and Jack Levy, "Present and Future Teachers of the World's Children: How Internationally-Minded Are They?," *Journal of Research in*

understanding is through their curriculum. Field emphasizes that intercultural and international understanding should be main aims of international school curriculums in addition to disciplinary understanding.⁴¹ While an internationally-focused education has become the goal of many schools, international or not, the interactions of a diverse student population in international schools allow students to develop intercultural understanding in a practical way.

Music Programs in International Schools

As mentioned earlier, many international school curricula use American or British curriculum models for their base. One study investigated the implementation of the 1994 Music Educators National Conference (MENC) American music standards in the secondary band programs of three international schools in China. Knopps found that the implementation of “American standards into a foreign context [was] successful, but...cultural elements experienced in the international school setting...provided some obstacles in the execution of curriculum.”⁴²

International Education 4, no. 3 (December 2005): 279–311, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240905057808>; Jon Grant, Eileen Kuhns, and Sarah Pickert, “Precollegiate International Schools: Leach’s ‘Ideal-Type’ and Today’s ‘Reality,’” *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l’Education* 41, no. 6 (1995): 501–10; M. C. Hayden, B. A. Rancic, and J. J. Thompson, “Being International: Student and Teacher Perceptions from International Schools,” *Oxford Review of Education* 26, no. 1 (2000): 107–23; M. C. Hayden and J. J. Thompson, “International Education: Perceptions of Teachers in International Schools,” *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l’Education* 44, no. 5/6 (1998): 549–68.

⁴¹ Field’s definitions of intercultural and international understanding are similar to Heyward’s definition of intercultural literacy. J. Field, “Middle School Music Curricula and the Fostering of Intercultural Awareness,” *Journal of Research in International Education* 9, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 5–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240909358884>.

⁴² Amy Marie Knopps, “The Implementation of American Standards in the Secondary Band Programs of Three American-Sponsored Overseas Schools Located in the People’s Republic of China” (uga, 2010), 107–8, https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/knopps_amy_m_201005_dma.pdf.

Obstacles found in these band programs included: ensembles with disproportionately large numbers of flute, clarinet, and saxophone players; students being focused on individual playing instead of contribution to the ensemble; and students having difficulty working in the abstract.⁴³ Knopps believed that these issues were common in many international schools around the world, but she maintained that they need not negatively affect the program. She argued that music teachers could be innovative in designing their curriculums to fully include all nine of the content standards, since they are not beholden to the same competitive pressures felt by many American music teachers.⁴⁴

Studies specifically concerning music programs in international schools are relatively rare. Of the research found, case studies examining multicultural⁴⁵ teaching practices in international schools were most common, but the studies presented conflicting results. Fulton observed multicultural teaching practices in three international school general music programs in China, Thailand, and Mongolia, but found that only one of them implemented multicultural practices.⁴⁶ Cain's survey of ten international school elementary music teachers in Singapore suggested that the music programs in the international schools there "provide examples of best practice in culturally diverse music education."⁴⁷ Building on these two previous studies, Bennet-

⁴³ Knopps, 108–9.

⁴⁴ Knopps, 110.

⁴⁵ "Multicultural" has multiple definitions in these studies, but all the definitions grasp at concepts similar to those found in "international education."

⁴⁶ Carolyn Fulton, "A Comparison of Multicultural Music Education Concepts in American - Based International Schools and Corresponding Host Country Schools: Thailand, China, and Outer Mongolia" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2001), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/250799291/>.

⁴⁷ Melissa Anne Cain, "Singapore International Schools: Best Practice in Culturally Diverse Music Education," *British Journal of Music Education*, July 2010, /core/journals/british-journal-

Walling found that most international school choral teachers in her study (126 participants from 59 countries) believe that multicultural and global ideas should be fostered in the classroom, but only 62% of respondents stated that they actually implement multicultural teaching practices in their classrooms.⁴⁸

Spano's 2002 survey of music programs in United States-Sponsored Overseas-International Schools ($N = 51$, a 28% response rate) provides the most comprehensive illustration of what teaching music in an international school is like.⁴⁹ This mixed methods study provided data about the status, components and concerns of these programs⁵⁰. Results from Spano's study of particular interest to this study are outlined below:

1. *Participation in music festivals*: 47% of the schools that responded participated in out-of-country ensemble music festivals and 51% participate in in-country festivals.⁵¹
2. *Music staff professional development*: While general-education staff development and funding for staff development existed on some level, more than half of the schools provided neither music staff development to their music teachers nor workshops in music education.⁵²

of-music-education/article/div-classtitlesingapore-international-schools-best-practice-in-culturally-diverse-music-educationdiv/7EF8F8C6811FC06ABC2F74F09C87CDC5.

⁴⁸ Bennett Walling, "Secondary Choral Directors' Multicultural Teaching Practices, Attitudes and Experiences in International Schools."

⁴⁹ Fred Patrick Spano, "The Status of Music Programs in United States-Sponsored Overseas-International Schools" (The Florida State University, 2002), <http://search.proquest.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/251804403/abstract/FEEC44B79A054EAFPQ/1>.

⁵⁰ It was interesting to note that many of the schools Spano surveyed are also AMIS member-schools.

⁵¹ Spano, "The Status of Music Programs in United States-Sponsored Overseas-International Schools," 64.

⁵² Spano, 77.

3. *Teacher Concerns*: “The narrative responses of this study found five main areas of concern that teachers had: (1) facilities and equipment; (2) curricular programs; (3) scheduling concerns; (4) administrative issues; and (5) student performances.”⁵³

While these studies provide a glimpse into the intricacies of teaching music in international schools, there is not enough literature present to make any generalizations. Each school seems to approach music education in a way that works for their students. Thus, the only consistency between music programs in international schools seems to lie in their variety.

Honor Ensembles

The model of AMIS festivals has grown out of the youth honor ensemble tradition in the United States,⁵⁴ which has a well-established history in communities across the country. The origins of these ensembles can be traced back to 1926, when Joseph E. Maddy established the first National High School Orchestra (NHSO).⁵⁵ All-city, all-county, and all-state ensembles, modeled after the NHSO, quickly emerged around the United States following the first meeting of the NHSO; at least 22 states had established all-state ensembles by 1929.⁵⁶ This honor ensemble tradition continues today. The All-National ensembles organized by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) include an orchestra, band, mixed choir, a jazz group, even an All-American marching band sponsored by the U.S. Army.⁵⁷

⁵³ Spano, 78.

⁵⁴ Both Mr. and Mrs. Bassett participated honor ensembles during their formative years. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

⁵⁵ Phillip M. Hash, “The National High School Orchestra 1926—1938,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 57, no. 1 (April 2009): 50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429409333376>.

⁵⁶ Hash, 64.

⁵⁷ “NAfME All-National Honor Ensembles,” *NAfME* (blog), accessed August 28, 2017, <https://nafme.org/programs/all-national-honor-ensembles/>.

Chapter 3: Method

Given the subjective nature of the research goals and other factors discussed below, this study is methodologically oriented as a focused ethnography. Originally drawing from work in comparative cultural anthropology, conventional ethnographies in social science and education fields endeavor to “develop a complex, complete description of the culture of a group.”⁵⁸ The term “ethnography” implies both (a) one way of studying a culture-sharing group, and (b) the product or written account of the research.⁵⁹

Focused ethnography is a complementary method to conventional ethnography first described by Hubert Knoblauch in 2005.⁶⁰ While the intent of focused ethnography does not differ from its conventional counterpart, its data collection strategies and methodologies reflect the “pluralization of life worlds” and the “increasingly specialized and fragmented activities” of contemporary society.⁶¹ It has emerged in recent years in practice-based disciplines (e.g. nursing) as “a useful tool in gaining a better understanding of the experiences of specific aspects of people’s ways of life and being.”⁶² As a methodology, focused ethnography is “typified by short-term or absent field visits, an interest in a specific research question, a researcher with insider or

⁵⁸ H. F. Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, n.d.); As quoted in John W Creswell and Cheryl Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed., 2017.

⁵⁹ Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*.

⁶⁰ Hubert Knoblauch, “Focused Ethnography,” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, no. 3 (September 30, 2005), <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/20>.

⁶¹ Knoblauch, 1–2.

⁶² Edward Cruz and Gina Higginbottom, “The Use of Focused Ethnography in Nursing Research,” *Nurse Researcher* 20, no. 4 (2013): 36–43.

background knowledge of the cultural group, and intensive methods of data collection and recording, such as video or audio-taping.”⁶³

Within the context of this study, there is no physical location AMIS resides to conduct extended observations of the group typical of conventional ethnographic methods. As such, most of the data collected “in-person” was gathered in the form of structured and unstructured interviews and informal interviews with teachers over the course of three days at the 2016 AMIS Music Educators’ conference. Other data were collected virtually and included the following: email correspondence, Skype interviews, virtual correspondence of teachers via the AMIS Music Educators’ Facebook group, and document analysis of the AMIS Executive Council’s virtual file storage system.

Also, my own extensive work as a member of AMIS for three years prior to the study impacts the involvement-detachment balance of the researcher found in conventional ethnographic research. Yet, Knoblauch argues that focused ethnographers can work against “a backdrop of common, shared knowledge” with participants and still be able to discover “alterity” or otherness, given a regard for reflexivity, allowing for a “nuanced perspective on a researcher’s insider/outsider status.”⁶⁴

⁶³ Sarah Stahlke Wall, “Focused Ethnography: A Methodological Adaptation for Social Research in Emerging Contexts,” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 16, no. 1 (November 24, 2014), <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2182>.

⁶⁴ Knoblauch, “Focused Ethnography,” 6–8; Wall, “Focused Ethnography.”

Sources

Primary Sources. Mrs. Bassett's *Personal History of AMIS* was the first piece of primary evidence acquired; this history helped to form an outline for the narrative and was the starting point for much of this study. I conducted two hour-long interviews with Mr. and Mrs. Bassett, the founders of AMIS, to clarify points in Mrs. Bassett's written history and to gather further information related to the research questions. Approximately 40 emails were exchanged between interviews, and the Bassetts had access to the document while it was being drafted so that they could provide feedback on the narrative. I also conducted an hour-long interview and exchanged numerous emails with Keith Montgomery, the current Executive Director of AMIS. Mr. Montgomery has been involved with the organization for 27 years and has a keen understanding of the organization's inner workings. To provide another perspective on the festivals, an interview was conducted with Dr. Andre Thomas, Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Choral Music Education at The Florida State University. Dr. Thomas conducted AMIS high school choir groups in 1991, 1998, 2008, and 2011.

An online database of the Executive Council's files provided data to support the information gained in these interviews. This database includes pertinent primary source documents such as the constitution and bylaws of AMIS, newsletter archives, meeting minutes, and feedback information from post-festival surveys. AMIS also has two private Facebook groups specifically available for music educators affiliated with the organization to network, celebrate achievements, ask questions, and receive help from other teachers. The posts in these groups are first-hand accounts of the struggles these teachers face and their achievements. They also illustrate the impact AMIS has had on the greater AMIS constituency from the perspective

of its members. This unbiased feedback from teachers yielded praises for and critiques of the organization.

Secondary Sources. There is no academic literature specifically pertaining to this organization, so most of the secondary sources used in this thesis serve to frame and contextualize the history of AMIS. These sources include historical facts and journal articles that cover various topics, including international schools and their history, issues facing teachers and students in international schools, and music education issues specifically within international education. A few theses and dissertations about some of the guest conductors involved in the festivals have also been located. These documents contain outside viewpoints on the festivals and have supplemented the narrative where appropriate.

Criticism

Authenticity. The written history of AMIS by Mrs. Bassett, the AMIS Board's database, and photos of the Bassetts are the only primary source documents used in the study. Most of these documents were composed digitally, so no original physical copy exists. Documents were obtained by direct email correspondence with Mrs. Bassett and Mr. Montgomery. The database of Executive Board Documents contains scans of original documents as well as digital copies of working documents. All secondary sources have been obtained through the University of Kansas Libraries and its online database.

Credibility. Mrs. Bassett's written history of AMIS and interviews with the Bassetts and Mr. Montgomery provided insight into some of the stories, struggles and motivations associated with the creation and growth of this organization. The Bassetts have dedicated most of their lives to this organization, so they would naturally want nothing less than the best light shed on their

work. Along a similar vein, Mr. Montgomery has been a leader within AMIS for a large part of his 27 years with the organization and currently serves as the Executive Director.

There is clear partiality and bias present in Mrs. Bassett's written history; she even makes her intentions clear at the beginning of the document:

This is the story of a very special organization and the special partnership which led to its being created. For this reason, it is a personal story and not simply a statistically correct article about AMIS.⁶⁵

There are also some dates in the narrative that are unclear. Facts within the written history served as a starting point for the study, but several dates and facts were clarified through follow-up interviews and primary source documents.

With this information considered, I tried to recognize the possibility for bias not only in my own interpretations, as discussed earlier, but also the bias in the interviews and other documents. To control for the bias, the information obtained from interviews and Mrs. Bassett's personal history was triangulated with data from the AMIS Board's documents; the posts within AMIS Facebook groups; an interview with a four-time AMIS festival conductor, Dr. Andre Thomas; and informal interviews with AMIS teachers.

⁶⁵ Georgia Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," n.d., 1.

Chapter 4: The Bassetts' Life before AMIS (1941-1974)

“The Seed is Planted”⁶⁶

The history of AMIS begins with two budding musicians from small towns at opposite ends of the United States. Richard (Dick) Bassett was born in 1941 and grew up in a musical family in the northwestern town of Snoqualmie, Washington.⁶⁷ Georgia Berthelon was born in Rochester, New York, just a year after Mr. Bassett⁶⁸ and spent most of her childhood in Las Cruces, New Mexico, just 46 miles north of the USA-Mexico border.⁶⁹ Following in the footsteps of his father, the band director at the local high school, Mr. Bassett excelled at the clarinet from a young age. Mrs. Bassett was also a gifted musician as a child and was drawn to singing and playing the violin in her school years. She explained, “I was happily being an academic in high school taking whatever courses I had to in order to leave periods free for both choir and orchestra each day.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ This chapter title is borrowed from Mrs. Bassett’s History of AMIS

⁶⁷ The 1940 Census states that Snoqualmie had 775 people living within the city limits. US Census, “1940 Census Enumeration District Descriptions - Washington - King County - ED 17-181, ED 17-182, ED 17-183, ED 17-184, ED 17-185, ED 17-186, ED 17-187, ED 17-188, ED 17-189,” accessed May 11, 2017, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5886083>.

⁶⁸ Mrs. Bassett was actually born in Rochester, New York, but moved to New Mexico with her mother and sister 15 months later and grew up in New Mexico. Mrs. Bassett explained that her mother had simply returned to live with her parents during WWII.

⁶⁹ Las Cruces was only slightly larger than Snoqualmie. The 1940 Census recorded a population of 1,354 there. US Census, “1940 Census Enumeration District Descriptions - New Mexico - Dona Ana County - ED 7-10, ED 7-11, ED 7-12, ED 7-13, ED 7-14,” accessed May 11, 2017, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5850440>.

⁷⁰ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 1.

Around the time the Bassetts were in junior high and high school, the Music Educators' National Conference (MENC) had just entered its "Second Fifty"⁷¹ and was in a period of rapid growth. Mrs. Bassett explained that "auditioning for All-State was a big deal in high schools all over."⁷² This sentiment was echoed in the *Music Educator's Journal* article entitled "MENC Makes History in Nineteen Fifty-Three."⁷³ A picture of the 1953 All-Northwest Orchestra from that article (see Figure 3) illustrates just how large these ensembles were.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Bassett were accomplished musicians who got to experience the "magic of All-State honor ensembles,"⁷⁴ and these experiences turned out to be extremely influential in their lives. Mrs. Bassett reminisced about how the New Mexico All-State Choir "seemed huge after the Las Cruces High School musical groups" and how "the New Mexico All-State Orchestra, in which [she] played next to the last chair in the second violin section, also left [her] in awe of the other musicians and the guest conductor."⁷⁵ Mr. Bassett participated not only in the All-State band but was also a member of the 1959 All-Northwest Band in Seattle, Washington:

[The band] joined with the Choir and the Orchestra from the same festival in an amazing finale. It was "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence." As [D. Bassett] still says, it was such an emotional and special moment that he could hardly blow into his clarinet. That is an experience he remembers almost 60 years later as one of the most important of his musical life.

⁷¹ "Beginning the Second Fifty," *Music Educators Journal* 44, no. 2 (1957): 56–57.

⁷² Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

⁷³ "MENC Makes History: In Nineteen Fifty-Three," *Music Educators Journal* 39, no. 6 (1953): 24–35, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3387701>.

⁷⁴ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 1.

⁷⁵ Bassett, 1.

So, the seed was planted. We both in later years talked about how important we thought it was to make it possible for other young musicians to have these wonderful experiences.⁷⁶



There were three "All-Conference" high school organizations at Bellingham. The orchestra is shown as a sample, illustrative of the tradition and spirit of the Northwest members, as typified by the biennial All-Northwest Band, Orchestra and Chorus. This year's enrollments totalled nearly 1,000. There were almost that many applications that could not be accepted.

Figure 3. All-Northwest Band, 1953.⁷⁷

Musical opportunities like the ones described by the Bassetts can have a lasting effect on students. In fact, important performances in a school music group and membership in an honor performance ensemble were found to be two of the most influential experiences affecting pre-collegiate students' choices to enter a music education degree program.⁷⁸

If one considers the Bassetts' childhood experiences in honor ensembles as inspiration for AMIS ensembles, it is already apparent that AMIS was envisioned to be different from a normal

⁷⁶ Bassett, 1.

⁷⁷ Photo caption is from the original article. "MENC Makes History," 25.

⁷⁸ David A. Rickels et al., "Career Influences of Music Education Audition Candidates," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 61, no. 1 (April 1, 2013): 115–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429412474896>.

school ensemble. The challenges Spano described⁷⁹ make it difficult for an international school music teacher to create the same American-styled large ensemble experience for their students, but an international ensemble that brings schools together is one way to remedy that problem. It was curious that the Bassetts only specifically referenced their experiences in honor ensembles as inspiration for AMIS, so this topic was addressed in the initial interview:

K. Weingarten: So, it has always been envisioned as an honor group?

G. Bassett: To help the kids who needed a little more. To reward the kids who needed a little more.

D. Bassett: Especially those kids, and we've all had them, whether we're international or not, that stay with you. They're loyal to their band, choir or orchestra programs, but they're so far superior in their abilities to the great majority of the kids. They still sit there every day, or however often rehearsals are, and try to be a helpful good part of an ensemble. Those kids need a chance to shine with something.⁸⁰

However, the honor ensemble mentality is a point of contention among teachers involved in AMIS. The existence of any honor group implies that there are students who are not in the group. With this conclusion, the following questions arise: Who gets into the group? Who is left out and why? How does selection happen and who makes the selections? Are there criteria for selection and, if so, what are they?

Questions such as these are frequently discussed both in person, during festivals or conferences that AMIS hosts, or online, via the AMIS Music Educator's Facebook Group. Keith

⁷⁹ Spano, "The Status of Music Programs in United States-Sponsored Overseas-International Schools."

⁸⁰ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

Montgomery, the current Executive Director of AMIS, explained that he frequently has conversations with educators about which students the organization serves:

If there's something that I hear directors asking for that I have to council them about, I will hear teachers say "AMIS is great for my top-drawer kids. What about the kids in the next drawer? What is AMIS doing for them?" It's a good question, and it's a good conversation to have.⁸¹

"A Double-Barreled Miracle"⁸²

Although Mr. and Mrs. Bassett began their journeys at opposite ends of the country, the events and decisions in their lives eventually lead them both to Oberlin Conservatory in Oberlin, Ohio. The Bassetts' journeys to Oberlin stories in themselves. Mrs. Bassett exclaimed in her personal history, "there was absolutely no likelihood that we would end up in the same university. As a matter of fact, it was so unlikely that we marvel that it happened."⁸³

United States public school curriculum underwent a dramatic change in the 1950s. The early part of the decade saw "progressive-minded educators focused more on a student's emotional, physical, and mental development, at the expense of developing such basic skills as reading, writing, and mathematics."⁸⁴ However, growing tensions with Russia and the rise of the Cold War scientific race, especially after the 1957 launching of *Sputnik*, caused educators to refocus on "basic learning skills, especially in math and science."⁸⁵ Part of the lawmakers'

⁸¹ Montgomery, Interview with the author.

⁸² Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 2.

⁸³ Bassett, 1.

⁸⁴ Julie L. Carnegie et al., eds., "The 1950s Education: Overview," in *UXL American Decades*, vol. 6, 1950-1959 (Detroit: UXL, 2003), 48-49, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX3436900303/UHIC?u=fair67600&xid=81d42255>.

⁸⁵ Carnegie et al.

strategy to win this race also included making sure that the best and brightest students of the time could receive a higher education and lead the next generation to further scientific and technological advancement. Consequently, the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) was founded in 1955. The corporation's mission was "to identify and honor scholastically talented American youth and to encourage them to develop their abilities to the fullest."⁸⁶

Mrs. Bassett was one of the 479,000 students (255,942 high school seniors⁸⁷) that took the first National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQT) in 1958. She did so well on the test, that she was one of only six people in her school to be a semi-finalist and ultimately one of the one of about 835 National Merit Scholars,⁸⁸ each of whom won a scholarship towards their college education. Before taking the test, it had not occurred to Mrs. Bassett that she could go anywhere other New Mexico State University, which was in her hometown. The Oberlin Conservatory was just a "pie-in-the-sky" university she had heard about before.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, after Mrs. Bassett won the scholarship, she sent audition tapes to Oberlin:

By a double-barreled miracle, I was admitted to the Oberlin Conservatory as a voice and music education major in the autumn of 1959. Oberlin liked having the title of the most merit scholars of any university in the US and also liked to have students from each of the 50 states in each class whenever possible. When I entered Oberlin, there was only one other student from New Mexico there.

⁸⁶ National Merit Scholarship Corporation, "NMSC History and Facts," accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.nationalmerit.org/s/1758/interior.aspx?sid=1758&gid=2&pgid=451>.

⁸⁷ John L. Holland, "The Prediction of College Grades from Personality and Aptitude Variables," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 51, no. 5 (October 1960): 245–54, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.ww2.lib.ku.edu/10.1037/h0041601>.

⁸⁸ John L. Holland, "The Undergraduate Achievement of National Merit Scholars and Certificate of Merit Winners," *The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals* 43, no. 247 (May 1, 1959): 190–92, doi:10.1177/019263655904324751.

⁸⁹ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 1.

Without those two special factors, I doubt I would have been admitted, since I had much less musical talent and more academic talent than was generally expected of Conservatory students.⁹⁰

Mr. Bassett's journey to Oberlin took a very different path. As a child, he struggled academically because of his dyslexia, but music was never an issue. His musical accomplishments in high school won him a scholarship to Central Washington State (CWS) College of Education in Ellensburg. From the beginning of his college career, Mr. Bassett thrived in his music studies:

By the spring of his freshman year, he was drum major, first clarinet in the band and orchestra, singing in the select choir and even playing in the faculty quartet because the same teacher taught both clarinet and oboe and couldn't play both in the faculty quartet.⁹¹

Around this time, the marching band at CWS had 120-130 members and was making up to fifty performances in a year.⁹² While there were plenty of performance opportunities for Mr. Bassett, CWS would turn out to not be as musically fulfilling as he would have liked. Mr. Bassett explained why he decided to transfer:

I think I felt like, "Is that all there is?" when I was already playing in the top groups [as a freshman] and involved in things you would expect to be involved in only when you were a junior and senior at university level.

A description of the CWS music program contemporary to Mr. Bassett's years of attendance best highlights how the college would leave a strong musician lacking:

⁹⁰ Bassett, 2.

⁹¹ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS."

⁹² Samuel R. Mohler, "The First Seventy-Five Years: A History of Central Washington State College, 1891-1966," 1967, 238, http://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/cahfacs_history/1/.

Orchestras, string ensembles, quartets, brass and woodwind ensembles, and other musical organizations have been formed as talent was available or interest warranted. Most of the work of the division, of course, is in the less spectacular areas of teaching music history and literature, and theory, and in giving private lessons. The Department regards training teachers to handle public school music programs as its main job.⁹³

So, in a search for “something more,” Mr. Bassett applied to transfer from Ellensburg to Oberlin, Indiana, Colorado, and even Hawaii. He told me during our follow up interview, “I had visions of lying on the beach all the time and practicing my clarinet.” While his clarinet-playing beach-bum dreams would not pan out, Mr. Bassett was admitted to Oberlin, and he enrolled as a transfer student in the fall of 1961.

This part of the narrative provides insight into who Mr. and Mrs. Bassett are as individuals. Initially, their “worldview” was very geographically limited:

G. Bassett: It never occurred to me that I could go to university other than New Mexico State University, which was in my home town.⁹⁴

D. Bassett: ...I thought anything outside the state of Washington was in another world, as far as I was concerned.⁹⁵

Around this time, going out-of-state for college was rare.⁹⁶ Mr. Bassett even mentioned that his transfer from CWS to an “esteemed institution” like Oberlin was an idea not supported by his

⁹³ Mohler, 239.

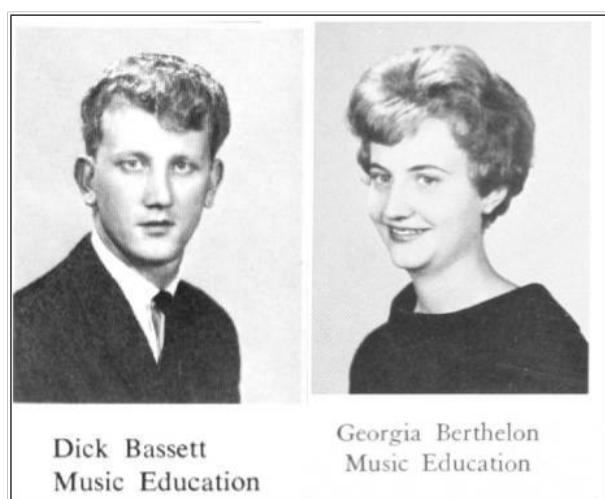
⁹⁴ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 1.

⁹⁵ Georgia Bassett and Richard Bassett, Follow-up interview with the author, May 24, 2017.

⁹⁶ In 1958, only 18.5% of students reported going out-of-state for university. Thomas E. Steahr and Calvin F. Schmid, “College Student Migration in the United States,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 43, no. 6 (1972): 445.

family. Despite these odds, both made the leap to Oberlin, and have reaped the benefits of that decision since. As Mr. Montgomery put it, “Sometimes you just leap, and only then does a net appear.”⁹⁷ It is evident that the Bassetts have always been risk-takers, and they believe that being a risk-taker is part of being an international school teacher, “You don’t go overseas unless you’re a risk-taker. You have to have a little bit of self-confidence, or you wouldn’t do it.”⁹⁸ We will see how this personality trait continued to guide the Bassetts on their journey.

Oberlin in Salzburg and “Remaining Awake Through a Revolution”



*Figure 4. Senior Year Photos of D. Bassett and G. Bassett, 1965 and 1963, respectively.*⁹⁹

The Bassetts did not dwell on their Oberlin experience during our interviews. Mrs. Bassett summed up the experience saying, “We were both in awe of the talent around us and

⁹⁷ Montgomery, Interview with the author.

⁹⁸ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

⁹⁹ “1965 Hi-O-Hi :: Digital Books,” accessed May 12, 2017, <http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/ref/collection/digitalbks/id/9999>; “1963 Hi-O-Hi :: Digital Books,” accessed May 12, 2017, <http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/ref/collection/digitalbks/id/7413>.

struggled, each in our own way, to survive being small frogs in what seemed like an awfully big pond. It was a fine education!”¹⁰⁰ Mrs. Bassett explained that the most defining moment in their college careers was the opportunity to participate in the “Oberlin in Salzburg” program. This experimental program, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, sent the entire conservatory junior class on a year-long trip to Salzburg, Austria, to study with professors from the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg, also known simply as Mozarteum Salzburg.¹⁰¹ Mrs. Bassett’s first trip to Salzburg was in the 1961-1962 school year, which was the year Mr. Bassett began his studies at Oberlin.

By the autumn of 1962, when Mrs. Bassett returned from Salzburg for her senior year, Mr. Bassett was on the Conservatory Board and a Junior Resident in his dorm.¹⁰²

G. Bassett: We got to know one another that autumn when I was in charge of baking for the Austrian coffee hour the Conservatory Board sponsored and Dick came to check on the baking progress.¹⁰³

So, when the time came around for Mr. Bassett’s class to go to Salzburg in the 1962-1963 school year, Mrs. Bassett applied, and was accepted, to go on the trip as a graduate assistant. These trips overseas fundamentally changed who they were forever; their experience in Salzburg “opened up the world to two people from small towns who came from very modest economic backgrounds and who had never had the opportunity to travel.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 2.

¹⁰¹ Bassett, 2.

¹⁰² Technically, Mr. Bassett was a sophomore at Oberlin in terms of his degree. Oberlin did not allow the transfer of any music credits to count toward the Conservatory degree.

¹⁰³ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

¹⁰⁴ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 2.

In Salzburg, we learned how wonderful the European audiences could be. They came to even a student recital simply because the music was being played. They could enjoy a good musical performance even when there were technical mistakes. We learned that there can [emphasis original] be many “right” ways to do things. We learned there were wonderful people living outside the United States. We learned the joy of actually being able to feel comfortable in another culture and even in another language.¹⁰⁵

That year in Salzburg was special for Mr. and Mrs. Bassett in another way, also. On Christmas Eve, at the home of their “Austrian family” that they saw on a weekly basis, Mrs. Bassett found an engagement ring in the bottom of her stocking.



Figure 5. The Bassetts' Engagement Photo, 1963¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Bassett, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Photo acquired from Mrs. Bassett.

Mrs. Bassett reminisced, “in Salzburg, we began a life partnership that has made the next more than 50 years special ones for us, as we learned that the sum of our partnership was more than we could accomplish simply as two individuals.”¹⁰⁷

June 14th, 1965, was a defining day for the Bassetts in two regards: (1) This was the day of their marriage, and (2) this was Mr. Bassett’s graduation day. The graduation is pivotal because Martin Luther King Jr. was the commencement speaker that year. His speech, “Remaining Awake Through a Revolution,” was a call to action that the class of 1965 would not soon forget:

I urge you to continue in the tradition that you have followed so long, for I am indeed happy to say that this institution has probably done more than any other institution to support the struggle for racial justice. You have given your earnings, you've given your bodies, you've participated in demonstrations, and you've participated in the determined struggle to keep this issue in the forefront of the conscience of the nation. I urge you to continue this as you go out to your various fields of endeavor. Never allow it to be said that you are silent onlookers or detached spectators. But that you are involved participants in this struggle to make justice a reality.¹⁰⁸

While this speech was awe inspiring and motivating, it was not an isolated event of activism at Oberlin. An English professor at Oberlin has said, “activism has in large measure shaped and defined the Oberlin ethos.”¹⁰⁹ This included activism for both women and minority populations. Oberlin College was the first American institution to admit women students and one

¹⁰⁷ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 2.

¹⁰⁸ Martin Luther King Jr., “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution,” accessed May 8, 2017, <http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/BlackHistoryMonth/MLK/CommAddress.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Bongiorno, “These Students,” *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*, April 1966, <http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15963coll16/id/199>.

of the first to admit African American students, as well.¹¹⁰ A resolution passed by the trustee of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute in 1835 stated, “The education of people of color...should be encouraged and sustained.”¹¹¹ While documenting the countless ways that the people of Oberlin lived out this resolution is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting that these efforts earned the college and conservatory the title of being a National Historic Landmark on December 21, 1965, a distinction that only around 2,500 sites in the United States bear.¹¹²

One special aspect of AMIS is its commitment to promoting international understanding. When asked about the future of AMIS, promoting international understanding was at the forefront of Mr. and Mrs. Bassetts’ thoughts:

G. Bassett: I know it sounds corny, but if there is a time in history, in our lifetimes, when it is really important to teach people, to bring them together and teach them to cooperate and to help them to work together, it’s now. I mean, that’s more than 30-40 years ago. Right now.

One of the guiding objectives of AMIS is “to advance the education of young people and their teachers in global issues and cultural diversity through the performance and study of music.” The

¹¹⁰ “GUIDE to the Women’s History Sources in the Oberlin College Archives” (Gertrude F. Jacob Archival Publications Fund, 1990), http://oberlin.edu/archive/resources/GUIDE_TO_THE_WOMENS_HISTORY_SOURCES.pdf.

¹¹¹ Quote cited on Oberlin’s Historical Sites. Electronic Oberlin Group, “The Struggle for Black Freedom,” accessed May 12, 2017, <http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/BlackHistoryMonth/blackhist.html>.

¹¹² Oberlin Heritage Center, “National Historic Landmarks,” National Historic Landmarks in Oberlin, accessed May 12, 2017, <http://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/researchlearn/nationallandmarks>.

pursuit of international understanding is even in the organization's acronym, which is the French word for "friends."

The roots of this commitment to international understanding seem to lie in the Bassetts' years at Oberlin. Joslin argued that effective international teachers need to develop and continually improve their intercultural competence, "Ultimately, therefore, there needs to be emotional and personal commitment to the pursuit of cultural understanding."¹¹³ This period in the Bassetts' lives provided the perfect opportunity to begin that development. The activism they were surrounded with at Oberlin provided the inspiration to be agents for change, and the first taste of what life could be like overseas in Salzburg created a whole new realm of opportunities in which they could be those agents.

"What else can you teach?"

In the two school years following the wedding, the young couple's marriage got its first real test. The Bassetts began their teaching careers in the small town of Weston, Connecticut. Mrs. Bassett was an elementary music teacher with a frantic weekly schedule, "My general music schedule itself was pretty frightening with its one hour a week of planning time and the rest of each day filled with 20-30-minute length music classes."¹¹⁴ Mr. Bassett was teaching middle school band, beginner instrumental lessons, and several general music classes. They had rented a rustic cottage in the woods that first school year and settled into their busy lives.

¹¹³ Pamela Joslin, "Teacher Relocation Reflections in the Context of International Schools," *Journal of Research in International Education* 1, no. 1 (2002): 59.

¹¹⁴ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 3.

Then disaster struck:

...two days after Christmas...we returned from a visit to New York City to find only the chimney of the cottage with the neatly stacked cord of wood on the front porch. Thankfully Dick had built a dog door for Topsy the day before we left for New York City, so she survived the fire.¹¹⁵

The fact that Mrs. Bassett refers to this event in her personal history as only a “major glitch” captures the tenacity and resolve of the Bassetts: “We figured since our marriage survived the fire experience, the debt of our first Christmas with credit cards, and three more moves that year, we could probably survive most anything that life sent our way.” The marriage not only survived, but it blossomed and flourished in the 53 years that have followed, beginning with a leap of faith. In January of their second year in Connecticut, they decided to make the leap into international teaching and signed up with International School Services (ISS) to find a new job overseas.

ISS was, and still is, an international company that helps to connect educators and schools around the world. To find a job with ISS, a teacher pays the membership fee, submits an application form and reference materials, including a resume, transcripts, certifications, a teaching philosophy statement, and references. Then ISS provides the teacher with vacancy listings, school data, and contact information for schools that have openings for the next school year.¹¹⁶ The membership fee also grants the teacher an invitation to a teaching fair. School representatives, usually a principal and/or director of a school, come to these fairs to meet,

¹¹⁵ Bassett, 3.

¹¹⁶ International Schools Services, “Find an International Education Job,” International Schools Services - Teaching Jobs Abroad, accessed May 13, 2017, <https://www.iss.edu/Career-Services/Become-Educator#memProcess>.

interview, and hopefully hire new teachers for their school. These fairs take place over only one weekend per location. This brevity often forces teachers to make life-changing decisions in less than 24 hours. The fairs can be a source of both significant opportunity and stress for teachers.

The Bassetts participated in one of these fairs that year:

...[We] were granted, among other things, an interview for two music jobs in ACS Athens. The day of our interview it snowed 16 inches! We managed to get chains for the VW so we could drive to the train station and got one of the last trains to run on that route that day to New York City. We interviewed with a superintendent who decided to hire us, so the adventure moved on to its next phase. I hate to think of the opportunities we might have missed if we hadn't gone to that interview, blizzard or no blizzard.¹¹⁷

So, in the fall of 1967, the Bassetts' international teaching adventure started at the American Community Schools of Athens (ACS). The school evolved out of a British Army School in the 1940s in the Athens suburb of Kolonaki.¹¹⁸ The school continued to expand over the next two decades, beginning to admit students in 1963 “from the wider American and international expatriate communities in Greece, and ACS Athens began to take on an international flavor within the framework of an American school.”¹¹⁹ The school enjoyed significant facility growth in the 1960s, but the school was still “surrounded by open fields dotted with a few farmhouses...ACS students would follow the rituals of the school day to the accompaniment of the sound of bells clanging from the necks of the flocks of sheep and goats

¹¹⁷ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 3.

¹¹⁸ American Community School of Athens, “ACS Athens - History,” accessed May 13, 2017, <http://www.acs.gr/history/>.

¹¹⁹ American Community School of Athens.

pastured in the neighboring fields.”¹²⁰ This was surely a different experience than anything the Bassetts had ever encountered in Connecticut.



*Figure 6. ACS Campus in 1962*¹²¹

Mr. and Mrs. Bassett arrived in Athens, Greece, and began their search for a place to live in the sweltering August heat not speaking a word of Greek.¹²² Thankfully, after almost a month of persistent searching and with the help of Hercules, the transportation manager at ACS and “very friendly and kind man who spoke excellent English,”¹²³ the Bassetts were able to secure a lovely marble villa a few blocks from the school.¹²⁴ Mrs. Bassett was slated to teach all the general music classes from Kindergarten to Grade 6. Mr. Bassett was originally hired to start the instrumental music program at a new ACS branch school but arrived in Athens to a surprise:

¹²⁰ American Community School of Athens.

¹²¹ American Community School of Athens.

¹²² Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

¹²³ Bassett and Bassett.

¹²⁴ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 3.

D. Bassett: I was told [by the administrators] that “Oh, we’ve changed our minds. We can’t afford an instrumental program, so we want you to teach elementary music.” And I said, “I’m sorry...I can’t do that, and/or, kind of, I won’t do that. It’s not my training; it’s not my background.”

[Them] “Well what else can you teach?”

And I said “well...maybe I had a little vocal experience. Perhaps I could try to start a choir at the high school level.”

[Them] “Well what else can you teach?”

[D. Bassett] “Um...I like to travel a lot so, how about 7th-grade Geography?” [laughs]

[Them] “Alright.”

So, six days before school was to start, and they were pretty well registered all the kids in high school for their classes. I ended up with six girls signed up for my high school choir. Then the problem was, there was no classroom available. There was no piano. So, I started out with these six girls and my clarinet outside, under a tree...umm... playing their pitches and their parts on my clarinet.

Kevin: And also teaching Geography?

D. Bassett: Yea... and about halfway through the year...when the weather got so bad that they had to let us find a room, they found a, a little um, well it was a room of a part of the...they were little huts that the people who serviced the school had lived in. This was a room that was about 12 feet by 12 feet, and it had a little heater in it. By the 2nd semester, I had 38 kids in this teeny little room. We couldn’t sit down there, and it was way too hot or way too cold because you got either no heat or you were burning yourself against the heater. Anyway. So, I taught; started the choral program and taught...

G. Bassett: Geography. We might’ve stayed there had the jobs been better, especially his.¹²⁵

Though Mr. Bassett’s job was not ideal, life outside of work was a dream come true.

They quickly became part of the vibrant, young expat community at ACS:

¹²⁵ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

Most of the other new teachers were also in their mid to late twenties, so we tended to socialize quite a lot.¹²⁶

They enjoyed Greek dancing lessons, Greek food, Greek beaches, and even began to learn the Greek language:

Dick and I both attended the classes offered through the school, where they were experimenting with a new method book written by the head of the language department. Audio-lingual was the way for us to learn with our musicians' ears and fairly painlessly, learning the grammar through memorizing the dialogues... I can, to this day, remember quite a bit of the Greek I learned over 40 years ago.¹²⁷

Ultimately, loving the culture was not enough to keep them in Athens, though. Mr. Bassett explained:

...We loved the Greek people...that part of the world, and the lifestyle, but there was no future for us. We were young professionals wanting to see what we could do in the world.¹²⁸

So, after two years of living and teaching in Athens, the Bassetts moved back to the United States.

In this chapter, we see the Bassetts' first conundrum over the word "international" within international education. ACS claimed that the school population had an "international flavor within the framework of an American school," but in our interview, Mrs. Bassett told me that the school consisted mostly of children of Greek Americans who had returned to Greece. In this situation, an underlying question remains: Should these schools actually be called "international" schools? As AMIS has grown, they have had to answer this question. Ultimately, they decided to

¹²⁶ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 3.

¹²⁷ Bassett, 4.

¹²⁸ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

cater to schools who teach primarily expatriate children, although there is no defined percentage of expatriate children that a school has to have in order to be a part of AMIS. Schools apply to become members, and the decision to include a school is made by the Executive Council.

Even before they encountered this dilemma, though, the narrative revealed one unique aspect of the Bassetts' character. Most people do not blindly uproot themselves and move to a new country, but Mr. and Mrs. Bassett are not most people:

K: Why did you go overseas in the first place? What drove you to make that leap?

G: We both loved the Oberlin in Salzburg experience so much. It was such an eye-opener. It was like a whole new world. We found out we loved traveling, we loved talking to people who were different. So even the very first year we were married, we filled out applications to teach as a teaching couple at one of the very isolated Marianna Islands, as the only people at that school. Thankfully, they turned us down, thinking "what are these two music kids doing?" It was one of those places where you had a boat come by with mail every six weeks. **We were just sure we wanted to be different; to do something different** [emphasis added].¹²⁹

The Bassetts' continued desire to "be different" and make leaps of faith, such as their Athens and Oberlin experiences, is a guiding force in their lives. It is also a trait AMIS seems to expect from its members. The teachers that are a part of the organization are all international school teachers, people who have decided to be different and see what teaching overseas is like. Students are expected to be different, as well. At the festivals, students are confronted with cultures, religions and views of the world that they may not have experienced before. To get the most out of an AMIS festival, they have to choose to be different – open to new ideas and paradigms instead of believing that their worldview is the only correct one – and mentally and

¹²⁹ Bassett and Bassett, Follow-up interview with the author.

emotionally make the “leap” towards international understanding. Sharing a passion for music helps this process, but ultimately the student has to decide to be a good world citizen.

“You change when you go overseas”

After two years in Athens, the Bassetts found themselves in Middletown, Connecticut, where they planned to complete graduate coursework at Wesleyan University. Mrs. Bassett planned to secure an elementary teaching certification to make the Bassetts more “saleable” in the international scene, since finding “two music jobs in an overseas school, even in those days, was not an easy feat.”¹³⁰ They quickly found teaching jobs there and thought they would be able to do evening and summer courses to get Master’s degrees, but as Mr. Bassett explained, their plan did not work out exactly as they had hoped:

We didn’t do our homework very well, but it was back in the days when we didn’t have internet and things so easily to access the information that one needs. We got there to find out that [Wesleyan University] didn’t have any evening classes. They only had classes during the day, and you had to be a full-time student.¹³¹

Luckily, they found coursework with a better-fitting schedule at the University of Hartford, which is only about 20 miles from Middletown. So, with a lovely rental house and new St. Bernard puppy named Hercules, they tried to make the most of their new life back in the United States. In addition to teaching and graduate workloads, Mr. Bassett was also a waiter at a gourmet restaurant and sold men’s clothing in Hartford part-time.¹³² The re-adjustment to life in America turned out to be more difficult than Mr. and Mrs. Bassett expected:

¹³⁰ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

¹³¹ Bassett and Bassett.

¹³² Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 4.

We did not have a clue what trying to re-integrate into a place like Middletown, Connecticut, would be like. We truly didn't realize how hard it was. There were, I think, five people in the whole teaching staff in that town that hadn't gone to Central Connecticut for their teacher training. Some of them had gone to that high school.¹³³

They struggled to relate with the people of this small town after their experiences in Athens:

G. Bassett: I had always thought of myself as a fairly average, middle-class person in America. Boy was I wrong. Suddenly, here we were, in this nice rented house with these Italian-American neighbors, and so we invited them over, like you do. I realized that people of my age in a town like that seemed to have no interest in anything that wasn't their husbands, their children, the weather, new recipes, or what is happening just down the block. I think we both had that kind of experience. It was a little horrifying.

Racial tensions in Middletown during the 1969-1970 school year were also on the rise:

G. Bassett: It was a very black-activist community in the university, so suddenly some of our black kids started being very bolshie, and one even attacked our shop teacher with a knife, one of those Stanley knives. That's the only time that I could ever even think that I understood why a teacher would want to go on strike, because they let him back in after just a couple of days, and we [the teachers] were all thinking about how dangerous it was going to be.¹³⁴

Finally, a breaking point was reached:

D. Bassett: ...when we went back [to Connecticut], we had determined not to discuss it until after New Year's...

G. Bassett: Our estimate was that it would take at least two more years to integrate, and we thought "Do we want to take two more years of our lives just so we can get back into the American thing?"

...I don't know, if it were another time, that it would have been different or not, but after that experience, we thought, "we don't want to do this." ...you change when you go overseas.¹³⁵

¹³³ Bassett and Bassett, Follow-up interview with the author.

¹³⁴ Bassett and Bassett.

¹³⁵ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

Shortly after January 1, 1970, Mr. and Mrs. Bassett were again signed up with ISS and decided they would consider teaching anywhere that was not an active war zone. They again braved a terrible blizzard to get to New York city and attend the ISS job fair. They accepted a job at the Community School in Tehran, Iran. The Bassetts made another leap of faith:

G. Bassett: We didn't even know where Iran was, even though Dick had taught world geography.

D. Bassett: [laughs] I sort of did, Georgia!¹³⁶

All they had found out about Iran prior to taking the job was what they learned from two articles in the Middletown library, both of which were about the family of the Shah, but that was enough. Mrs. Bassett's personal history states it best: "We were ready for our new adventure."¹³⁷

The Bassetts' experience back in the United states would be described as reverse culture shock. The term is an adaptation of the term "culture shock,"¹³⁸ and is an application of the transition theories discussed in the review of literature. It is defined as "the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time."¹³⁹

This section illustrates just how different the Bassetts, and international teachers, are in comparison to the general American population. Today, only about 40% of Americans own a

¹³⁶ Bassett and Bassett.

¹³⁷ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 4.

¹³⁸ Kalervo Oberg, "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments," *Practical Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (July 1, 1960): 177–82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009182966000700405>.

¹³⁹ Kevin F Gaw, "Reverse Culture Shock in Students Returning from Overseas," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 24, no. 1 (January 2000): 83–104, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(99\)00024-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(99)00024-3).

passport,¹⁴⁰ and that percentage has only seen a sharp increase in the last twenty years or so.

AMIS's insistence on not only music education but also education on global citizenship stems, at least in part, from their experiences in Connecticut. Mrs. Bassett's explanation of her Italian-American neighbors speaks to the lack of global awareness and understanding that AMIS tries to counter every year, using music to bring people together and foster a new generation of global citizens.

A Bigger, Better Hut

If one can put the students of Community School...in a nutshell, besides the fact that we turn heads wherever we go, it was that we celebrated our differences, but we didn't put them in boxes. Our neighbours [sic] south of the border call it the "**melting pot**;" more acclimated to the Canadian palette is the term "**multiculturalism**." Then there is the word "**tolerance**," but that is an obscenity in my dictionary. And then there is "**co-existence**?" Further still...the capacity to find the universal among "**plurality**?" [emphases original] – a graduate of the Community School, Class of 1974¹⁴¹

In August of 1970, the Bassetts landed in Tehran for their newest teaching assignment. Iran in the early 1970s was very different from the image of Iran that people might conjure up today. The end of the Second World War brought a new wave of Americans working for the oil industry, multi-national corporations, or the military to the country. By the 1970s, there were about 70,000 Americans living and working in Iran.¹⁴² At the time, Iran was enjoying a period of

¹⁴⁰ The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that there were 326,474,013 Americans at the end of 2016, and the U.S. State Department reported that there were 131,841,062 valid passports in circulation in 2016, leading to 40.38% of Americans having passports.

¹⁴¹ Sandra Kouko, "Saturday Morning Get-Together Breakfast, August 8, 2009" (Community High School Reunion 2009, Montreal, Canada, August 8, 2009), <http://www.csreunion.com/articles/multiculturalism.pdf>.

¹⁴² Victor Dabby, "The Rise and Fall of Tehran's Community School," September 24, 2006, <http://www.csreunion.com/articles/tehranscommunityschool.htm>.

modernization under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi that included a series of economic and social reforms that became known as the Shah's "White Revolution."¹⁴³ This period of peace and reform would only last until 1979, though, when the Shah would be overthrown in the Iranian Revolution, transforming Iran from an absolute monarchy into an Islamic republic.¹⁴⁴

The Community School was established in the 1930s as a Presbyterian missionary school,¹⁴⁵ and had remained as such until the year that the Bassetts arrived.¹⁴⁶ Even though it was founded as a Christian school utilizing an American curriculum, the school tried to emphasize international understanding:

Here in miniature we find "One World" in spontaneous reality with no imposition from above. Children from twenty different nations and six different religions - Christian, Orthodox and Protestant, Jew and Moslem, Zoroastran and Sikh - study, work, and play together with no clashes or friction of any kind.¹⁴⁷

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Community School, along with the United Nations International School in New York, Atlantic College in Wales, the Lycee International de St. Germain in France, the Goethe Gymnasium in Germany, and the Geneva International School in Switzerland, engaged in developing the International Baccalaureate (IB) program.¹⁴⁸ However, the Community School ultimately decided to not implement the IB program when the program

¹⁴³ National Archives, *Echo News Reel Number 88*, 1971, <http://archive.org/details/gov.archives.arc.650286>.

¹⁴⁴ "History of Iran: Islamic Revolution of 1979," accessed May 14, 2017, http://www.iranchamber.com/history/islamic_revolution/islamic_revolution.php.

¹⁴⁵ J. R. Irvine, "Iranzamin, Tehran International School –," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, March 30, 2012, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iranzamin-tehran-international-school>.

¹⁴⁶ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 4.

¹⁴⁷ C. B. Fisher, "Uniting Nations in Iran," *The Journal of Education* 131, no. 1 (1948): 18–19.

¹⁴⁸ Irvine, "Iranzamin, Tehran International School –."

was founded in 1968. Sadly, the school had to close its doors for good in June of 1979 due to the rising tensions of the Iranian Revolution.¹⁴⁹



Figure 7. Community School international festival, circa 1970¹⁵⁰

The Bassetts' four-year tenure in Tehran was a time of great learning for them, personally and professionally. Mrs. Bassett's elementary school teaching certification had resulted in a new opportunity for her:

I was hired to do high school choir and classroom 3rd grade, because I said I would try a double classroom, which was an experiment that they were doing a lot in those days. So, my teaching partner would have to take all 54 of the kids for an hour a day while I taught HS choir.¹⁵¹

Mr. Bassett conducted the band and taught a "world cultures" class:

¹⁴⁹ Dabby, "The Rise and Fall of Tehran's Community School."

¹⁵⁰ Photo acquired from Mrs. Bassett.

¹⁵¹ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

D. Bassett: Well, I continued an instrumental program, and made it grow. And I had a hut...

G. Bassett: It was a better hut

D. Bassett: it was a bigger, better hut. It did leak a lot when it rained, but we got around that...

...[In the world cultures class,]we had every major religion of the world represented every year, every semester, in that class. It was a very international teaching job.¹⁵²

Mr. Bassett was even put in charge of the fine arts department during his time at the Community School:

I was the youngest member of 12 teachers, and I was telling them what I thought we should be doing...We did a couple of days of fine arts festival, and had things happening all over the campus and stuff. Again, great learning curve for me.¹⁵³

In addition to in-school performances, music performances were arranged in the Tehran community. During the Christmas season, Mrs. Bassett's choirs would perform at the Hilton Hotel in Tehran as part of the Christmas tree-lighting ceremony.

The Bassetts enjoyed their students' commitment to music and the school's continued commitment to promoting international understanding:

G. Bassett: A lot of incredibly musical kids. Strangely enough, or maybe it isn't strange, a lot of the kids who were certainly high-powered choral students came from the Iraqi Jewish community. And they were some of the more third-generation in community school, because the Iraqi Jewish community had always been educating their women as well as their men and they thought this co-educational school was a good idea.... We were really sold on the internationalism of that school. It wasn't a conscious thing, it just happened. It was so absolutely incredible.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁵³ Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁵⁴ Bassett and Bassett, Follow-up interview with the author.



*Figure 8. Mrs. Bassett conducting the Community School Choir for a Christmas ceremony at the Hilton in Tehran.*¹⁵⁵

Not everything about the job was perfect, though. The school's missionary connection initially came as a surprise to the Bassetts:

D. Bassett: They didn't tell us [about] that. We were wondering why our salaries were so low. We each made \$3500 a year.

G. Bassett: On which, we paid 15% income tax.¹⁵⁶

As a point of comparison, the average salary for a teacher in the United States during the 1970-1971 school year was \$9,268.¹⁵⁷ This lack of school funds extended into the music program budgets as well:

D. Bassett: ...to get a baritone saxophone or something like that, required two years of work and paying people off at the customs

¹⁵⁵ Photo acquired from Mrs. Bassett.

¹⁵⁶ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

¹⁵⁷ "Digest of Education Statistics, 2009," accessed May 22, 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_078.asp.

place to get it in. I would take pictures of timpani down to the bazaar, where I would try to get the local coppersmith, who made rice pots [laughs] and say, “could you make this?” Then I’d find somebody who had skins and things...and we did it! They looked beautiful... they sounded like hell, though! [laughs] You were just trying to make do all the time, trying to come up with some way around all of the problems that you just wouldn’t have if you were in a Western country.¹⁵⁸

A discussion of acquiring music and other resources in Tehran followed:

G. Bassett: It was virtually impossible. We ordered a little bit...it must’ve been a little bit in Tehran.

D. Bassett: But the budget was like \$300 or something for all the music for anything.

G. Bassett: You photocopied is what you did. There were no copyright laws in Iran, so...

D. Bassett: If we had a summer where we got away and got to a PD place where we could pick up a few things... I mean it was just catch as catch can. There was no money. Even if you ordered something...

G. Bassett: ...was it going to come?

D. Bassett: ...you may never see it. Even if you do, maybe you have to spend three times what it costs to get it out of customs. That kind of thing was just so frustrating.¹⁵⁹

Despite these struggles, not even the allure of jobs at a prestigious international school could pull them away at first. During their second year in Tehran, the Bassetts received an invitation to apply for jobs at the American School of London (ASL):

G. Bassett: ...[W]hen the opportunity first arose that we might go to London, that we might go to this American school...

D. Bassett: We said no. We didn’t want to. We didn’t think we wanted to be with just American kids and Embassy kids.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

¹⁵⁹ Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁶⁰ Bassett and Bassett.

Mrs. Bassett beautifully captured their reason for not leaving in this simple phrase, “We felt we had much more to do.”

And more they did. When the Bassetts arrived, music ensembles met outside of the school day, but they succeeded in making it a part of the curriculum. Student involvement in music grew, as did the quality of performances. In addition to their music classes and performances, the Bassetts also became involved in drama productions both at the school and in a community theater group called “Masquers” at the Iran America Society. Most of these productions were put on in close coordination with a 5th-grade classroom teacher at the Community School, Patricia (Pat) Zich. In their final year in Tehran, they even presented the first licensed amateur production of “Godspell” for 14 performances to packed houses. (“Yes, Iran has changed a lot since then!”).¹⁶¹ This relationship with Ms. Zich would prove to be important to the Bassetts both personally and professionally. Mr. Bassett, Mrs. Bassett, and Ms. Zich would all move on to London and continue to put on wonderful productions there. Years later, Ms. Zich would go on to found the International Schools Theater Association (ISTA), the organization after which the Bassetts patterned the initial structure of AMIS.

So, two years after the first invitation, a second invitation to apply for jobs at ASL was extended to the Bassetts. This time, they decided to consider the opportunity:

G. Bassett: We thought, “Well at least we should go.” So, we took **every** penny we could find and we went during spring break and visited the American School in London. This was during the whole IRA period...[where] there were power cuts, 4-day work weeks, 3-day work weeks. It was not a good time to go to London.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 4.

¹⁶² Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

While the area was not ideal, the job was a band/choir director's dream come true:

It was the perfect job...

G. Bassett: Dick would come in as department chair and do the band program, and I would do grade 5 through 12 choral music. So, it was an opportunity to have full time music, not K-6, but upper level.¹⁶³

...with a fantastic facility...

D. Bassett: It was a wonderful facility. Brand new 5-million-pound school, which at that time, that was a lot of money. In the heart of London with every facility you could imagine. 3 music rooms, offices, practice rooms.¹⁶⁴

...a healthy budget...

D. Bassett: [We had] kind of free reign in a very nice budget that I'd never seen before that was just for music.¹⁶⁵

...and a supportive administration...

G. Bassett: Most importantly, we had a headmaster who was really anxious to build up the music program. [To Mr. Bassett] He'd had how many department chairs? Three or four?

D. Bassett: Four in four years.¹⁶⁶

The offer was simply too good to pass up. In the summer of 1974, the Bassetts made the move from Tehran to the American School of London. This move would turn out to be their last move to a new school.

The Bassetts' time in Tehran was one of the sparser sections of Mrs. Bassett's personal history, but it is clear their time in Tehran was pivotal to the creation of AMIS. The international

¹⁶³ Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁶⁴ Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁶⁵ Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁶⁶ Bassett and Bassett.

focus of the school was inspiring for the Bassetts as music educators. Their ensembles were truly international, an experience that made them recognize that music can be used as a tool for teaching students to be global citizens:

D. Bassett: It really began to make us realize how important music was to...that we could do something to make...bring hands together... make world citizens instead of separating us all and making us all fearful of the things that we don't know about. I think that's where the whole ideas really began to happen, but...

G. Bassett: We didn't know it yet.¹⁶⁷

Not only has AMIS grown out of a need for bringing students together, but also for bringing teachers together. The Bassetts' struggles to acquire instruments and other music resources in Tehran exemplified some of the challenges that international teachers face, and they were not the only ones dealing with these issues:

D. Bassett:...there were so many people around the world who were in the exact same position we were in. They were isolated in Lagos or some place...[and they] usually are young. That's why you go in to do this [get into international teaching]. You start out, if you have a wife or a girlfriend and tell [administrators] you don't have children to start out with. All those things change and evolve as time goes on, but you still feel very isolated.¹⁶⁸

Mr. Montgomery also discussed his struggles of international teaching he experienced in his interview. Before his position at AMIS, he had accumulated 26 years of overseas teaching experience in Cairo and London. He mentioned feeling isolated:

K. Montgomery: A lot of music teachers work in isolation, because...especially if they're in an American-styled, ensemble-based music program, there's not going to be anybody else who relates to what you do. In Cairo, I lived in a city of 20 million people,

¹⁶⁷ Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁶⁸ Bassett and Bassett.

but the number of people who actually understood what my job was at the American School? Very few.¹⁶⁹

However, in characteristic fashion, the Bassetts turned these struggles into opportunity:

D. Bassett: We thought, “You know, if our profession is to grow and improve and we want music to be alive and well in all the places around the world that these international schools are, somebody needs to do something to find some way to begin to bring these people together. To find a place where they have some resources that they can go to.”¹⁷⁰

So, while the seeds of AMIS were planted in the childhood experiences of the Bassetts, Tehran was what helped them come into bloom.

¹⁶⁹ Montgomery, Interview with the author.

¹⁷⁰ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

Chapter 5: The Bassetts and AMIS (1975-Present)

Growth, Growing Pains, and Lessons Learned

When forming this chapter, it became clear that continuing a chronological organization of the narrative would not adequately capture the people, complexities and growth that happened in the twenty years leading up to the formation of AMIS. As such, I partitioned this section of the narrative – Growth, Growing Pains, and Lessons Learned –into themes based on the aspects of planning that were, and still are, necessary to create successful and meaningful experiences for AMIS festival participants. I adopted this organizational structure to illustrate how each theme evolved since the first festival in 1975 and has shaped how someone would experience a festival today. The chronological format continues in the subsequent section, “The time seemed right.”

Introduction. England has been home to the Bassetts since their arrival in London for the 1974-1975 school year. They taught at ASL for twenty years, with Mrs. Bassett as the choir director for grades 5-12 and Mr. Bassett as the band director and music department head. While the festivals are the main focus of this chapter, the Bassetts also kept themselves busy creating other wonderful music opportunities for their students:

Somehow, maybe because we were young and full of both energy and a sense of purpose, we managed to host [the festivals] along with a solo and ensemble festival with the DODDS schools and to start the tradition of an annual music tour to somewhere on the Continent for our own high school music groups.¹⁷¹

The 1974-1975 school year was an accreditation year for ASL, and as head of the music department, Mr. Bassett was very involved with this process. It was during this process that Mr. Bassett met Wallace (“Wally”) Threlkeld, who was the member of the accreditation team

¹⁷¹ Bassett and Bassett.

assigned to music. Wally was the band and choir teacher at London Central High School, which was one of the DODDS schools in England at the time. It was during these accreditation meetings that the idea for an honor group was conceived:

D. Bassett: [Wally and I] got talking, and I realized that he and all the other DODDS schools in England... had pretty good instrumental and vocal programs. They had lot of mediocre kids and a few really quite good kids, and I said, "We need to bring these kids together and form kind of a little honor group."¹⁷²

Scheduling the first concert was a challenge in the already extremely busy ASL school calendar, but Mr. Bassett managed to find time in late May. Because it was so late in the school year, and close to exam time, convincing students to take time off from their studies was difficult. On May 22, 1975, 65 high-school students from four of the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DODDS) in England and ASL performed as the brand-new "American Wind Ensemble." The program notes from this first concert highlight the aspirations of the group:

This day's workshop and concert represent the first opportunity enjoyed by the instrumental music students of the five participating schools to work in the equivalent of an "All-State Band." Each band director selected from his own group approximately twelve of his finest players to participate in this band. It is the sincere hope of all involved that this "Honor Band" workshop and concert can become an annual tradition.¹⁷³

And a tradition it became. Over the next twenty years, these humble beginnings paved the way for opportunities larger than the Bassetts ever thought possible.

¹⁷² Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁷³ Association for Music in International Schools, "Collection of Past AMIS Festival Programs, 1975-2014," n.d.

The ECIS Music Committee. Before delving into the growth of these festivals, there is one critical event that needs to be mentioned. Around the time the Bassetts were making their move to ASL, the European Council of International Schools (ECIS),¹⁷⁴ of which ASL was a part, was encouraging the formation of subject-area committees. Mrs. Bassett explained how the music committee was started in her personal history:

In 1976 Neal Yocom and Mary Jane Belz, who taught at Frankfurt International School, asked all of the music teachers in Europe to make a real effort to attend the annual conference for the European Council of International Schools where we actually could have roundtable discussions and sightreading [sic] sessions. At that time ECIS was encouraging the formation of subject area committees. The librarians had been the first to organize one and those of us at the conference agreed that we needed a music committee. The music education committee had Georgia Bassett as its first chair and Michael Lansdon from International School Hamburg as its second chair.¹⁷⁵

The music committee was beneficial for the growth of AMIS in a number of ways. One of the ways that ECIS helped was through funding, which will be discussed in further detail later. The biggest advantage of ECIS was the professional connections the Bassetts made with other teachers:

G. Bassett: Having met a number of these people through ECIS conferences initially, and working on the ECIS committee in the beginning was very important for the growth of this organization. In the beginning, it was just the DODDS schools in the UK and us. It was because we met [teachers] through ECIS, that it started to evolve.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ ECIS is the parent organization of the Council of International Schools (CIS), discussed in the review of literature. Today the organization is called the European Collective of International Schools.

¹⁷⁵ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 6.

¹⁷⁶ Bassett and Bassett, Follow-up interview with the author.

Because of these ECIS connections, the 1979 festival became the first festival that could be truly called *international*: one flautist from Frankfurt International School, one soprano from Munich International School, and nine choir students that Michael Landson brought from the International School of Hamburg joined ASL and the DODDS schools for the first time. After this first international festival, word of the festival spread like wildfire: schools in Brussels, Paris, Antwerp, and Milan joined the festival in 1980; Stavanger American School in Norway and even The Parents Cooperative School in Jeddah joined in 1981. While there were only five schools represented at the first festival, by the 1995 festival, 35 schools were represented.

Funding. One question that the Bassetts continually found themselves asking was, “How are we going to pay for all of these festivals?” Three avenues of financial support that the Bassetts found to be beneficial in the twenty years leading up to the establishment of AMIS were financial support from private donors, the DODDS program, and ECIS.

Initially, there was an adequate amount of financial support from the ASL administration, but as the festivals continued to grow, that support waned. In order to offset growing festival costs, the Bassetts knew they had to find money elsewhere, and they found it for a time through the parents at their school. Many of the parents whose children attended ASL worked in the oil industry, banks, or other large companies in the London area. For a time, Mrs. Bassett would write to the parents whom she knew worked in these industries and ask them to help pay for some of the festival costs, such as program printing or meals. Eventually this practice was frowned upon by the ASL administration, forcing them to stop this method of fund-raising. Through official channels, they were able to secure £5000 from the McDonalds Corporation, but this sponsorship only lasted two years.

John Stanley was the Music Coordinator for DODDS Europe during the time the festivals were beginning. The Bassetts hailed John as integral to the initial success of the Honor Band and Choir Festivals. Because of his efforts, the festivals began to have guest conductors. He was able to secure U.S. government funding for the conductor's travel expenses if the conductor provided professional development sessions for the teachers during the festival. It was also John's idea to start looking into commissioning composers to write for the group. Through his connections, he was able to get "big-name" composers like Clare Grundman to write and premiere works at these festivals.

Edith Copley is another important person to mention in terms of funding. She served as the ECIS music committee chair briefly in the 1980s. During her time as chair, she was able to secure financial support from ECIS for the festivals. So, with funding from all three of these sources, the festivals would prosper temporarily.

However, that time would come to an end. As previously mentioned, significant financial support from ASL for these festivals waned after about five festivals. DODDS funding was pulled after the 1991 festival due to government-mandated cutbacks in the DODDS program. Lastly, the ECIS funding started to disappear in the early 1990s. As these avenues faded, finding funding for the festivals became more and more time-consuming. The need for someone to continually fund-raise would become one of the reasons the Bassetts felt AMIS needed to be created.

Festival Timing. By the third festival in the Spring of 1979, the Bassetts were able to find a stable date for the festival that fit into ASL's busy school calendar:

It was the weekend of the third Saturday in March, one week after the major spring sports tournament that so many of our students participated in. For

many years the date for this sports tournament was “carved in stone” and honored by all the schools. So, it came to be that the Honor Band and Choir Festival would be held on “our” weekend for many years to come without being in direct conflict with sports.¹⁷⁷

Even as the schedule of festivals gradually expanded, the third Saturday in March was “the” weekend for the Honor Band and Choir Festival for nearly 40 years. The 2014-2015 school year was the first time that the Honor Band and Honor Choir did not happen on the same weekend. The Honor Band Festival still happened on the third weekend in March, but it was joined by the Honor Orchestra this year.¹⁷⁸ The Choir festival – which included Women’s, Men’s, and Mixed Choirs – happened a week later.

Hosting the Festivals. The Bassetts hosted the Honor Band and Choir festival at ASL every year from 1975 until 1990. Mrs. Bassett reflected:

For those many years ASL families hosted the students from other schools, I did the housing assignments, the ASL music moms provided the pre-concert banquet, Dick and I cooked a special dinner for the directors at our house the night before the performance, and I contacted parents who worked for various banks and oil companies asking for financial donations to cover the cost of printing programs and to supply the food for the banquet.¹⁷⁹

For the first festivals, the students were housed within the ASL community. ASL families would house two to three students for the weekend and feed them breakfast and dinner. Due to the growing popularity of the festival, the Bassetts eventually determined that this was not a sustainable option. In 1983, they began housing the students in a hotel, which has been the

¹⁷⁷ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS.”

¹⁷⁸ The pairing with the Honor Orchestra was a born of a desire to be able to create a symphony orchestra by having wind and percussion players cross over to join the strings for a selected work. 2015 was the first time that the Honor Band met in Asia; it was held at the Singapore American School.

¹⁷⁹ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS.”

arrangement for high school students at festivals ever since. Once middle school festivals started happening, AMIS teachers determined that middle school students were not developmentally ready to handle being in a hotel room. The school community housing system is still in place for middle school festivals today.

By 1990, there was pressure from the ASL administration to stop having the Honor Band and Choir Festival every year, “They said that we were spending too much of our energies on the project, which probably was true, at least in their eyes.”¹⁸⁰ Mr. Bassett’s heart seemed to agree with the ASL administration:

The Monday after the festival Dick went into the nurse’s office at ASL to catch a quick nap. The nurse decided to take his pulse and listen to his heart and then decided to call an ambulance. He had an irregular heart beat for about two weeks and was in the cardiac unit at Royal Free Hospital for investigation. He was of course simply exhausted and had been running on adrenaline, caffeine, chocolate and alcohol for the previous week. Thankfully the heartbeat problem has never been repeated...¹⁸¹

So, with some reluctance from the Bassetts, the festival moved out of ASL for the first time in 1991, when it was hosted by the International School of Brussels. “To prevent the necessity of re-inventing the wheel each year,”¹⁸² the Bassetts felt that each school should host the festival for at least two years. The festival was hosted in 1991 and 1992 in Brussels, at the International School of Düsseldorf for the 1993 and 1994 festivals; and was being held at the American School of The Hague during the official establishment of AMIS. These festivals were organized by one of the teachers at each new school, whereas all prior ASL festivals were

¹⁸⁰ Bassett.

¹⁸¹ Bassett.

¹⁸² Bassett.

organized the Bassetts. During these first years the festival was away from ASL, the Bassetts learned that hosting these festivals was simply too much for one teacher to organize. The health of the host teachers at Brussels and Düsseldorf waned during the years they organized the festivals:

...it proved to us that this festival could not be a one-person show, even with fine administrative support... How fortunate we had always been to have our own unique personal partnership supporting our festival organizing.¹⁸³

Since the establishment of AMIS, the Honor Band and Choir Festival and all of the other festivals that have been added change host schools every year. Today, host schools are determined a year in advance, and a teacher from each host school works with Mr. Montgomery in preparation for the event. A large part of Mr. Montgomery's job as AMIS's Executive Director is being that second set of hands necessary for a smoothly-run festival.

Festival Repertoire. Music repertoire for the festivals was initially a collective decision made by the teachers involved in the festival. Mrs. Bassett reflected on this process in her history of AMIS:

When we think back on the first few festivals it is hard to fathom how gutsy, and perhaps sometimes ridiculous, our music choices were. We had a meeting at the beginning of each school year with the DODDS teachers during which we all suggested specific pieces to be the repertoire for that year's festival. Much of the choice was determined by the pieces the DODDS teachers had ordered earlier. We always added some from our own ASL library.¹⁸⁴

The early festival repertoire consisted of what one could deem a "standard American concert:"

¹⁸³ Bassett, 10.

¹⁸⁴ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS."

The band repertoire always included at least one march, usually a Sousa march, and at least one lighter, jazzier piece...The choral repertoire always had one number with a Latin text, at least one spiritual and at least one “pop” arrangement, usually more. For a number of years there was also a madrigal included in the program.¹⁸⁵

Finding repertoire that was appropriate for the group proved to be a difficult task in the early festivals. Mrs. Bassett said that they “never had any trouble picking the pieces, but often none of the teachers wanted to tackle the hardest of the selections, even if they had originally suggested the title.” Not only did some of the other teachers not feel comfortable conducting some of the pieces, but sometimes the pieces were too difficult for the students.

Lessons were learned, though, and as the festival has progressed, the students’ quality of playing rose and repertoire choices have also become easier with more experience. When the festival changed to a guest conductor format, it became the conductor’s responsibility to choose the repertoire. This repertoire was always approved by the Bassetts, though. Today’s festivals happen in a similar format: the conductors choose the repertoire, and it is approved by Mr. Montgomery as Executive Director of AMIS, who typically asks for advice from AMIS teachers before approving the choices.

Another significant part of the festivals’ repertoire has been compositions that the Bassetts (and later as AMIS) have had commissioned. Mr. Bassett explained:

We started realizing that, to become a real professional organization, one of the important things that must do is encourage young composers to write quality material for young groups that have limitations in their musical ability. That in itself has been, when you look back from those meager starting points, when somebody would give us a little money. Clare Grundman was the first person, and a

¹⁸⁵ Bassett.

named person, to do that and all the people in between to where we are now with some of the top composers in the western hemisphere are willing and happy to write for us, because if we get it right, it'll be a successful performance of their music.¹⁸⁶

Technically, the first commissioned piece was *A Posy* by Kevin Thompson in 1985,¹⁸⁷ but because of Clare Grundman's fame as a composer at the time, the Bassetts refer to his 1986 commissioned piece, *A Fantasy on English Hunting Songs*, as the launching point for this project. Since then, a total of 85 pieces have been commissioned by AMIS.¹⁸⁸

Festival Conductors. In AMIS festivals today, there is a guest conductor for each ensemble. This has not always been the case, though:

The procedure was that each teacher would conduct one number in the program. (This format is still used in many places when teachers start organizing groups from a number of schools.) The advantage of this was that it didn't cost anything to hire a conductor and each teacher did have a chance to work with a better and usually bigger group than usual. The disadvantage was that each of us pushed quite hard during our own rehearsal time with the group to make sure "our" piece would sound good in concert. There was no cohesiveness in what we were asking of the ensemble. Some of the teachers were quite hesitant about conducting, so Dick and I invariably ended up conducting the trickiest selections, the ones that no one else wanted to tackle. The funny point about this was that often these were NOT the selections we had personally wanted to see programmed.¹⁸⁹

This method of mixed conductors continued for the first seven years of the festival, but the need for one guest conductor leading each ensemble was quickly recognized. During the 1981-1982 school year, the Bassetts took a sabbatical year, using the year to visit numerous music programs

¹⁸⁶ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

¹⁸⁷ Association for Music in International Schools, "Collection of Past AMIS Festival Programs, 1975-2014."

¹⁸⁸ Association for Music in International Schools, "Database of AMIS Festivals," January 2017.

¹⁸⁹ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS."

around the United States. During that year, the Bassetts met Jon Bailey, who was teaching at the School of Sacred Music at Yale during that time:

G. Bassett: We met him at Westminster Choir college when we went there for summer sessions. He was happy to come over and conduct a choir festival. We never paid anybody anything. I can't even remember...what did we pay his plane ticket the first time? Then we'd just keep people up at the house and feed them and take them around, but never paid them anything.¹⁹⁰

At the 1983 festival, Jon Bailey became the first guest conductor for the Honor Choir; the Honor Band was still conducted by teachers that year. The other person who was vital to getting the guest conductors into the festivals was John Stanley. John talked about how he came to invite James Croft, Director of Bands at Florida State, to conduct the Honor Band in the 1984 festival:

At the time, I was the Coordinator of Music for the Department of Defense Dependent's Schools. When I first went to observe the Honors Band, each one of the participating band directors was conducting it and I felt as though we weren't getting anywhere [by following this practice], because there was no professional development for us. I think the first year we had someone from the United States military: Carl Chevellard. Then we felt that this was the way to go and it was maybe a year or two afterward that we invited Jim to come, because Jim was one of the names that I knew.¹⁹¹

John found that he could get funding to bring in guest conductors for the festivals if they did professional development work with the DODDS teachers. Thanks to John's work and connections, the 1985 festival was the first festival to have two guest conductors; Jon Bailey returned to conduct the choir, and Frank Battisti came to conduct the band. These big-name

¹⁹⁰ Bassett and Bassett, Follow-up interview with the author.

¹⁹¹ Direct quote from John Stanley in this dissertation: Alan W. Mills, "The Life and Career of James Edwin Croft" (The Florida State University, 2010), 126, <http://search.proquest.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/872908336/abstract/BDAC87740BD14F38PQ/1>.

conductors brought a new wave of excitement to the festivals. Unfortunately, the Bassetts also had to learn a hard lesson about choosing conductors at this festival:

At that time, the Honor Band was not yet of sufficient quality for someone like Frank Battisti to be working with them. It was one of the hardest festivals for those of us promoting the idea of a positive experience for our most talented and dedicated students. The band students survived being belittled for three days, but it did not help to promote the values we wanted the festival to represent. We learned the hard way that while someone may be a fine conductor and clinician, he or she may not be the right person to be a conductor for one of our festivals.¹⁹²

Today, the seeking out and vetting of conductors is a “laborious and multi-pronged” process and is a major responsibility of the Executive Director’s job. Guest conductors for the high school festivals are usually collegiate professors or professional conductors and musicians, but for middle school festivals, conductors are selected “in-house” from the teachers working at AMIS schools. Room and board is covered for all visiting conductors, and outside conductors – those who are not AMIS teachers – are usually paid a small honorarium as thanks for their work. While these honoraria are less than the typical payment someone would receive in the United States, conductors have never been hard to find:

D. Bassett: Everybody that came, right from the beginning, has always been really taken back by the family aspect of our organization and how dedicated these kids are that we have. And the international community, how...

G. Bassett: ...how cooperative the teachers are with each other. The back-biting that many people experience, especially in good old Texas Band people, but I mean everywhere. When you would go to contest, certainly, and see various states, it didn’t exist. They would come and they would see. [speaking for the guest conductors] “Well

¹⁹² Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 8.

this is incredible, because you have teachers encouraging each other and working together.” Well, duh!¹⁹³

Communications. Living in the 21st-century, it is easy to take the technology we have and the ease of international communication for granted. Aside from the initial interview with the Bassetts, most of the information for this project was gathered via technology, such as using Skype for my interview with Mr. Montgomery and my follow-up interview with the Bassetts. Today’s AMIS festivals are mostly organized via email, Skype sessions, and digital distribution of materials, but it has not always been that easy. When asked about how they managed to successfully host these early festivals, especially the once the festivals became international, the Bassetts’ answers were fascinating:

G. Bassett: In these early days, we operated without any means of contacting participating schools except by mail and very, very occasionally by phone... We were one of the few departments at our school allowed to make some direct dial long distance calls when absolutely necessary.

D. Bassett: The best thing we would have was a fax machine, if at the other end, at the other school, there was a fax machine. Even with that, you were still worried about whether that fax actually got to the music teacher that’s in a cabin at the far end of the campus in Tokyo. And then you’ve got time differences and all that.¹⁹⁴

Because not every school had access to phones or a fax machine, mailings were the primary form of communication between schools for many years:

D. Bassett: ...we ended up starting to call it the “white mailing” and the “blue mailing” and the “green mailing” and the last mailing is the “purple mailing” and that should answer all of your other questions... Hopefully, they had gotten all of those mailings so they were up to date.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Bassett and Bassett, Follow-up interview with the author.

¹⁹⁴ Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁹⁵ Bassett and Bassett.

...and sending out the music...oh the hassles...making copies and then finding out, via a frantic phone call from Japan, that the last bar missing on the third page of the 3rd clarinet part.

The mail was not always reliable for things like audition tapes, though. This was especially true for the schools in Saudi Arabia that participated in the early festivals. Mrs. Bassett told me about a teacher at the Parents' Cooperative School of Jeddah, John Leonard, who was able to find a clever alternative to this issue: because his school was owned by Saudi Arabian Airlines, he would come every year to bring instruments to London for repair, and at the same time, he would bring in audition materials.

Despite these challenges, the Bassetts have always found a way to make the festivals happen. It goes without saying that advances in technology have made festival communication significantly easier. However, the real improvement comes from unrelenting dedication of the Bassetts and other teachers to continually make the festivals better for everyone involved.

Student Auditions. Auditions have been, and remain one of the most debated topics among AMIS members. While the festival has always been envisioned as an honor group for the top students in these schools, there was also a secondary goal of generating interest in the festival so it could grow. To help get more students interested, there could not be a stringent audition process in the beginning. So, when it was first conceived, each teacher simply selected his or her best students to bring the festival. Mrs. Bassett explained the issues with this system:

This meant there were inherently two problems: one was the fact that in some schools the best students were not at all as good as the best students from other schools. It also meant that we often had many more flute players and many fewer French horns than good instrumentation dictated.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Bassett and Bassett.

At the time, the ASL program also had students that were more advanced than the DODDS schools. Most of the students in ASL came from oil company areas like Oklahoma and Texas, places that also happen to have strong music traditions in their schools. As a consequence, Mr. Bassett would often have to ask students to fill in last-minute for parts that were not covered by students from the other schools, and Mrs. Bassett “practically had to bribe the men in my choir to participate.” Ultimately, letting every teacher choose their festival participants could not continue:

D. Bassett: ...we had to start some kind of an audition process, because some of these teachers were bringing kids that just had no business in being there at all. It was frustrating for the other teachers and the students who were sitting next to somebody who couldn't play their part.¹⁹⁷

The first mention of any type of formal audition process appears in the program for the 1981 festival:

Students who participate in the Honor Band and Choir Festival are selected by audition. This year the band students submitted audition tapes and the choir students were selected by their respective directors.¹⁹⁸

While this was a start at the process, the Bassetts shared that Edith (Edie) Copley, who was the choir director at the American International School of Vienna and Chair of the ECIS music committee at the time, was the person who really got the audition process running:

It was her idea that the festival had reached a point where it needed a specific set of audition materials that all would have to submit if they were to participate. This meant we would have a common set of criteria for the skill level needed to enter the festival. Not only

¹⁹⁷ Bassett and Bassett.

¹⁹⁸ Association for Music in International Schools, “Collection of Past AMIS Festival Programs, 1975-2014.”

did she suggest that we hold auditions, but she also suggested specific materials for us to use for the choral students. One of Edie's choral audition exercises remains a core item even in current audition materials.¹⁹⁹

In the current audition process, students send in audition tapes in the fall of each school year, and the tapes are adjudicated by a listening committee made up of teachers. In the first few years of the listening committee, the teachers tried to get through all of the tapes in one day, but that eventually proved to be too arduous of a task:

I still vividly remember one year in Brussels when we listened to choral auditions from 9 one morning until 3 the following morning. Obviously, our discriminating ears were pretty exhausted long before we finished. And that's why we started using at least two full days plus for audition committees.²⁰⁰

Even with this audition process in place, it still took time to fully change the ethos of the festival to a truly high caliber, especially in the choir. During the 1989 festival, some of the teachers became so distressed by how unprepared some of the students were that they got together and decided that all singers would be tested on their music at the beginning of the next festival. Mrs. Bassett described their initial testing procedures as "rather draconian," but they were effective. "It is now a matter of honor for the teachers as well as the students not to have to have extra help during social time in order to be allowed to participate in the festival concert."²⁰¹

It takes months of planning, constant communication with multiple people, and meticulous attention to detail to make an AMIS festival happen. Even though it takes such a

¹⁹⁹ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 7.

²⁰⁰ Bassett, 10.

²⁰¹ Bassett, 8.

significant amount of work to plan the festivals, AMIS is never in short supply of teachers willing to host a festival. Mr. Bassett explained why:

Time and time again, when we have talked someone into hosting an AMIS festival, the reaction is always so positive within their entire community about this thing of bringing all of these young people together... They would say, “Wow, what a fantastic concert!” by Saturday night. Two and a half days and boom: The friendships, the other kinds of attachments that they make to the community. When the parents are opening their homes and saying, “I don’t want them to go back. We want to adopt this child or these kids because we’ve had such a great time with them.”²⁰²



*Figure 9. European Middle School Girls' Honor Choir in Budapest, April 2015.*²⁰³

²⁰² Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

²⁰³ Photo taken by author.

“The time seemed right.”²⁰⁴

After twenty years of service to ASL, 1995 proved to be a year of profound change for the Bassetts:

This was a time of some upheaval at ASL. After years of very supportive administration, our new head of school had as her top priority the encouragement of all the more expensive veteran teachers to move on.²⁰⁵

Both Mr. and Mrs. Bassett had asked for sabbaticals during the 1994-1995 school year. only Mr. Bassett was granted one, but only at $\frac{3}{4}$ pay, which was a change that the new head of school had introduced.

D. Bassett: They were very happy that I had the sabbatical because part of that was going to America and conducting and going on tour with the Air Force Band, and while I was away, they started to attack Georgia on her own.²⁰⁶

Mrs. Bassett referred to this year as “the darkest year of [her] professional life.” At the time, Mrs. Bassett was teaching in all three divisions of ASL. She initially had issues with the middle school principal, but as the year went on, it was clear there was problem with the other principals as well:

...it became obvious that the effort to make my life as uncomfortable as possible was a master plan, not one from a single administrator. I finally was told that if I applied for the “silver handshake,”²⁰⁷ it would be granted to me, so in May I learned my leaving date was set for June of 1995. Dick was offered the “opportunity” to be

²⁰⁴ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

²⁰⁵ Bassett and Bassett.

²⁰⁶ Bassett and Bassett.

²⁰⁷ A silver handshake is the colloquial term for an early retirement incentive, usually in the form of increased pension benefits for several years or a cash bonus.

released from his two years of post-sabbatical teaching but declined.²⁰⁸

They had always expected to leave ASL together, sharing the stage in a final concert, but it was not to happen.

[That year] made life just miserable enough that we thought, “What the hell? Why should we continue on when we have this idea for a full-fledged music organization?”...the important thing to remember was that we had seen ISTA, this theater group, started by our dear friend [Patricia Zich] 10-15 years earlier, and saw how that had grown and how there was a real need for the theater people. I kept saying, “We should do this too. There’s the same kind of need.”²⁰⁹

As seen throughout their lives, when the Bassetts faced challenges, they always turned them into opportunities. This time was no different. Mrs. Bassett took the “silver handshake” in June of 1995 and began setting her sights on making the Bassetts’ dream music organization a reality.

By 1995, the Honor Band and Choir Festival was growing more popular and becoming more international in scope, and the time seemed right to start something new. Mrs. Bassett explained:

We watched the festivals helping to promote the idea of musical excellence and passion for the students but also became an opportunity for so many music teachers to actually give and receive mutual support and professional help from the guest conductors who were coming in by that time.”²¹⁰

The Honor Band and Choir Festival was in its twentieth year, and there were other festivals happening around Europe as well – an honor Orchestra had been established in 1990 by Petra Koehler from Frankfurt International School and ASL string teachers Ken and Janet

²⁰⁸ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

²⁰⁹ Bassett and Bassett.

²¹⁰ Bassett and Bassett.

Slavett; a Middle School Honor Choir for treble voices had been established in 1989 at the College du Lemman in Geneva, Switzerland, and in its six years, had also been hosted at the American School of Paris and Antwerp International School in Belgium; a “Boyz Sing Too!” festival had even been established in 1992 to encourage boys to sing, and it had enjoyed three successful festivals at schools in Frankfurt, Vienna, and Hamburg.

So, prior to the November 1995 ECIS conference, Mrs. Bassett wrote to everyone that they knew who had hosted a festival and asked if they would like to come together for a meeting about creating an independent organization that would be responsible for supporting and organizing the festivals, with the hopes of adding other opportunities later:

This meeting was held in conjunction with the November conference of the European Council of International Schools (ECIS). And so, the actual AMIS story began. A number of those [teachers] who attended that first meeting were in favor of helping to form an actual independent organization, though some were worried about making the move to an organization not under the auspices of ECIS.²¹¹

The biggest omission from the initial organization turned out to be the strings teachers. The chapter in Mrs. Bassett’s history of AMIS about string teacher involvement was written by Elizabeth Poland, a former string teacher at the John F. Kennedy School in Berlin. She wrote:

In 1995 Honor Orchestra was still in its infancy and needed time to run its own show. At the time AMIS was formed, Ken and Janet Slavett were still very keen to keep handling the organization of the Honor Orchestra festival and I think the string teachers were just as keen to let them do it, keeping string things in the string family. This meant that the Honor Orchestra organizers declined the [initial] invitation to become a founding part of AMIS.²¹²

²¹¹ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 14.

²¹² Bassett, 10.

While Mr. Bassett was finishing his last semester at ASL in the spring of 1996, Mrs. Bassett was busy drafting the founding documents for the group. Mrs. Bassett received a lot of support and guidance from her dear friend from Tehran, Patricia Zich. Ms. Zich had founded ISTA in 1978 and helped Mrs. Bassett make sure all the documents were in place for the formal founding of the organization. All that remained was a name:

G. Bassett: Everything [in education] has acronyms today, and so we thought, “We had to have something.” We tried every configuration of Music and International and so forth. Finally, I don’t even remember who it was or where it came from, but this.... AMIS! It’s a real word!

D. Bassett: It’s the French word for friends and the whole international-ness, music, friends...it just seemed to be the most logical thing in the world. It says what it says: The Association for Music in International Schools.²¹³

The silver handshakes from ASL gave the Bassetts the opportunity to use their own funds for all the start-up expenses of the new organization such as telephone, internet, paper, envelopes, and stamps. Mrs. Bassett prepared the necessary documents by the 1996 Honor Band and Choir Festival at the International School of The Hague, and it was there that AMIS was born. Mrs. Bassett became what they initially called the “Executive Consultant”²¹⁴ for the organization and a volunteer board, called the “Executive Council,” was formed to guide the direction of the organization. The Executive Council co-chairs were Hal Halvorsen from American School of Paris and Jim Yarnell from American School of The Hague. The first full

²¹³ Bassett and Bassett, Follow-up interview with the author.

²¹⁴ The position is called Executive Director today.

board of this organization consisted of the two co-chairs plus Mr. Bassett, Jodi Benecke, Michael Lansdon, Nelson Monteith.²¹⁵

With the documents in place and a new organization founded, the next step was to get members:

I started writing to headmasters of schools that had hosted festivals before and said, “We have this new support organization for music in international schools. Will you pay...I think it was £75 or something...to belong to this organization?” I was scared to death!²¹⁶

Thankfully, many letters returned with positive results. Mrs. Bassett exclaimed, “We all heaved a big sigh of relief when those first few membership applications and checks for membership fees started to come in!” In its first year of formal existence, AMIS was able to secure 27 school memberships and nine individual memberships, but this was just the beginning.²¹⁷ AMIS membership and festivals have been thriving ever since.

One of the most important documents the Bassetts created when founding AMIS was the AMIS mission statement. The published mission statement for AMIS reads as follows:

The Association is an international, non-profit, non-sectarian, politically neutral organisation dedicated to the promotion of excellence at all levels of music education. Its objectives are to advance the education of school pupils and teachers throughout the world by developing their understanding, knowledge, and appreciation of music; to advance the education of young people and their teachers in global issues and cultural diversity through the

²¹⁵ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS.”

²¹⁶ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

²¹⁷ Association for Music in International Schools, “Collection of Past AMIS Festival Programs, 1975-2014.”

performance and study of music; to promote high standards of musical performance in school pupils of all ages and abilities throughout the world; to promote furtherance of educationally valuable music repertoire.²¹⁸

Mission statements are meant to be a guiding tenet for an organization, shaping its direction and the goals it pursues. If the pertinent vocabulary of the statement is too broad or vague, many interpretations are bound to arise. If too many strong, opposing interpretations exist, the growth of an organization could be stunted. To this day, the AMIS Executive Council frequently refers to the mission statement when making important decisions.²¹⁹

AMIS Flourishes

Since its establishment in 1996, AMIS has enjoyed consistent growth in membership and been able to introduce many new opportunities for students and teachers alike. Even in its first season, AMIS introduced an Honor Jazz Band Festival. That festival has become so popular that it now features three full rhythm sections. Each of these sections play a third of the Big Band pieces, and spend the rest of the festival rehearsing jazz combo pieces also performed at the Jazz Festival concert. As of 2008, a vocal jazz ensemble was also included on the program for this festival.

On the choir side of things, the middle school choirs were the first to expand. In its first season, AMIS sponsored the Middle School Honor Choir and the “Boyz Sing Too!” festival. Due to increasing popularity, these festivals evolved rapidly. The “Boyz Sing Too!” festival developed from an all-treble group to include treble and changing voices, eventually becoming

²¹⁸ Association for Music in International Schools, “About AMIS,” accessed February 20, 2017, <http://amis-online.org/about/>.

²¹⁹ Montgomery, Interview with the author.

an honor group, called the Middle School Honor Boys' Choir. The Middle School Honor Choir also eventually split:

At one time, there were well over 100 students in Middle School Honor Choir, a real hosting problem for host schools. So, we divided the festivals, trying to keep the number of students to be hosted to around 72 participants from 12 schools.

By 2004, the Middle School Honor Choir had evolved into three honor groups: Middle School Boys' Honor Choir, Middle School Girls' Honor Choir, and the Middle School Mixed Honor Choir, which included boys with changed or changing voices.

Continual requests from AMIS band directors for a middle school band festival were honored in 1999, when Neal Yocom hosted the first Middle School Honor Band festival at the American School of Paris. For the first festival, teachers sent in lists of their recommendations of students they most wanted to bring to the festival. From these lists, a lottery system was devised to choose who got to attend. Mrs. Bassett described it as a "long and laborious project." This festival's selection process has evolved into the same blind audition process used for the HS festivals.

All of the HS festivals that have been added to the AMIS calendar have always been truly international. Participants have been taken from every AMIS school across the world. The same cannot be said for the middle school festivals, though. As schools in Asia began to join AMIS, the organization began to look eastward. They found that there were adequate regional festivals happening at the high school level, but the same could not be said for middle school festivals. So, AMIS's first move into Asia was by way of an Asian Middle School Honor Band Festival.

Teachers at the International School of Beijing first offered to host the festival in 2000, but doubts and discussion among the AMIS Board delayed the first festival. Most hesitant

teachers were concerned with the safety of students at festival in a developing country. The Board decided to take the gamble in 2006, though. “For this first middle school level band festival in Asia we felt we needed a tried and true excellent band director and music educator with lots of AMIS festival experience.”²²⁰ Longtime AMIS teacher Neal Yocom from the American School of Paris was invited to conduct this first festival in Asia. While this festival was not without its glitches, the Bassetts maintain that the move to Asia “has proved to be a very wise move in the growth of AMIS.”²²¹ There are now middle school band, choir, and orchestra festivals that happen in both Europe and Asia.



Figure 10. European Middle School Girls' Choir at the American School of Paris, April 2014²²²

²²⁰ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 17.

²²¹ Bassett, 17.

²²² Photo taken by author.

Speaking of the orchestra, the International Honor Orchestra had existed outside the AMIS organization to this point. In our interview, Mr. Bassett explained that AMIS eventually took over the orchestra festival, but the transition was not very smooth:

...we realized that there was a need for strings stuff, but the strings people that were trying to do their string orchestras were also teaching full time, and there were some really poorly-organized festivals...All last-minute things. There were a lot of unhappy orchestra people, so we said to them, "Look, we're happy to take over the organizational part of your group, and have you being represented on the board. If you want to stay on your own that's fine, but we're going to have to offer our own string program and we want you to know that's what we're going to do because there was so much pressure from so many people."²²³

The orchestra teachers took a vote during the 2005 orchestra festival and decided to come under the AMIS umbrella the following school year.

A Changing of the Guard

By the 2013-2014 school year, the ever-expanding AMIS calendar began to take its toll on the health and energy of the Bassetts. They were busy with travel and had to rely on the help of several gracious teachers to do some of the clerical work for AMIS and even hired a few of their neighbors to manage the financial books. It became clear to Mr. and Mrs. Bassett that "AMIS had now reached a point where management could and probably should move to the hands of the next generation."²²⁴

²²³ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

²²⁴ Bassett, "A Personal History of AMIS," 18.



Figure 11. Mr. and Mrs. Bassett's Final Concert as the official leaders of AMIS, 2014²²⁵

In 2013, a worldwide search was conducted by a committee of the Executive Council to find two people that would become the “new Dick and Georgia.”²²⁶ The committee received a significant number of applications from people both within and outside AMIS. After shortlisting the applications and conducting interviews, Timothy Germann was hired as the Chief Operating Officer – responsible for implementing and maintaining the operational infrastructure of AMIS’s ever-expanding activities – and Keith Montgomery was hired to become the first Executive Director of AMIS – responsible for coordinating all of the AMIS festivals and events and representing AMIS, as directed by the Executive Council, to the various groups within AMIS and to the rest of the world. Since most of Tim’s work is carried out electronically, he continues

²²⁵ Photo acquired from Mrs. Bassett.

²²⁶ This was the phrase Mr. Montgomery used in our interview when describing the search committee process. Montgomery, Interview with the author.

to live in Berlin, where he formerly taught at the John F. Kennedy School. Mr. Montgomery technically resides in London, but much of his life happens on the road; he is present at every AMIS festival.

Today Mr. and Mrs. Bassett run a bed and breakfast out of Church Farm House, their English-countryside cottage in Norfolk, England. While they have passed on their full-time management of AMIS, the Bassetts still stay involved with the organization:

G. Bassett: While I continue to be a consultant with AMIS and Dick continues in his membership of the board, we are trying to move on to a life where AMIS is one important component of our life rather than its central focus.²²⁷



Figure 12. Mr. and Mrs. Bassett watch a live stream of an AMIS festival from Church Farmhouse, 2017²²⁸

²²⁷ Bassett, “A Personal History of AMIS,” 19.

²²⁸ Photo acquired from Mrs. Bassett.



Figure 13. Map of AMIS Schools as of Spring, 2016²²⁹

AMIS Today

Even after the changing of the guard, AMIS has continued to thrive. In addition to the festivals already mentioned, AMIS has also added a plethora of other opportunities. There is an annual Music Educators' Conference that alternates between Europe and Asia. The conference has been a great learning and networking opportunity for music teachers at AMIS schools, especially elementary teachers and those who do not have large performing ensembles at their schools. Solo and Ensemble festivals are now held annually for students, and next year, two workshops will also be held for students and teachers of IB Music, one in Amsterdam and one in Beijing.

Like any successful organization, one of the “good problems” AMIS has is learning how to deal with the growth of the organization:

²²⁹ Created using maps.google.com and list of AMIS schools. Association for Music in International Schools, “About AMIS.”

AMIS has never expanded just for the sake of expansion. Throughout history, AMIS has responded to demand. That's the way we've always expanded. These separate middle school festivals that we do in Asia...those were a natural outgrowth...One by one, these festivals began to segment, so that there was one in Asia and one in Europe so more kids could have that opportunity. We never did expand like that in Asia until there was actually demand for it. Now, the demand is in Africa and the demand is in South America. [speaking as those teachers] "Why aren't you here? Why doesn't AMIS do a festival here?" These schools in South America that are travelling these huge distances to be part of AMIS festivals.²³⁰

So, in response to this need, AMIS next year will be adding two new middle school Honor Mixed Choirs in South America and Africa, giving the 2017-2018 school year record total of 17 events during the season:

Montgomery: It's [the travel schedule] going to be **insane** for me next year, but we'll do what we have to do. When I say this to Tim Germann, he just looks at the floor and shakes his head. [Mr. Montgomery laughs.] You know, you go to the city, you get the job done, and then you go to the next city, and you get the job done. You don't look at the calendar and marvel at the impact of all those dates on the calendar – the X's on it – you don't do that. You just get the job done.²³¹

At the end of initial interviews with both the Bassetts and Mr. Montgomery, the same question was posed, "What does the future of AMIS look like to you?" Mr. Montgomery's answer was optimistic, yet practical:

AMIS will be where it should be. AMIS is going to continue to grow. I know that just from watching it over the last 20 years. It will continue to grow, but it will grow organically. It will not grow artificially. It won't grow in any direction simply because somebody thought it was a great idea. It will go where the demand is. So, I think my job, over the next 9-10 years, is to be alert as to where we are needed, like the Africa and South America thing that I was talking about before. If it appears that we are needed someplace, it's my job to have an awareness of it. If teachers in IB schools are

²³⁰ Montgomery, Interview with the author.

²³¹ Montgomery.

crying out for help or advice on how to cope with the IB, then it's my job to hear that. It's my job to keep an ear to the wind and know where we are needed, where we go next, and advise the board in that regard.²³²

It was easy to tell that Mr. and Mrs. Bassett's answer came from a profound love of the organization. AMIS has been their life work, but their hope for the future was profoundly simple:

G. Bassett: We hope it is always going to be run by music educators, for music educators.

D. Bassett: That's really the whole thing in a nutshell. We've seen other organizations like ours, including ISTA, move into lots of professional people in the business who are not educators...ISTA is still a very fine organization, but it's gone in a different direction because those people are interested in different kinds of things. They're performing artists, you know...

...[But] I think AMIS wouldn't be the same if professional musicians were on the board. We would lose the basis of, "Hey! This is about...here we are going out every morning here in the trenches and trying to do the best job we can. Teaching music the best way we know how, and exposing the kids to the right kinds of things."²³³



Figure 14. AMIS teacher James Libbey briefly pauses a sectional rehearsal for a quick photo opportunity²³⁴

²³² Montgomery.

²³³ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

²³⁴ Picture taken by author.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The main purpose of this research was to examine the efforts of two remarkable, yet largely unknown, music educators who were integral to the advancement of music in international schools around the world. The research questions guiding this study of the Bassetts' lives and AMIS were: (1) How did the Bassetts come about creating and growing the AMIS organization and, (2) how has that organization impacted music education world-wide for the last 42 years? The paragraphs that follow summarize the narrative and then, via discussion of AMIS mission statement, use the narrative evidence to offer answers to the research questions posed. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Mr. Bassett, an accomplished clarinetist, and Mrs. Bassett, a vocalist and violinist, met at Oberlin Conservatory, where they were both studying to become music educators. The Bassetts' participation in honor ensembles in their formative years and in the "Oberlin in Salzburg" program – a year-long study abroad experience for Oberlin music majors at the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg – provided the inspiration to look for opportunities for teaching overseas. "We were just sure we wanted to be different; to do something different."²³⁵ Throughout their career, the Bassetts held teaching positions at the American Community School of Athens, Greece, the Community School in Tehran, Iraq, and ultimately in ASL in London, England, where the honor festivals began. Over the next twenty years, the festival grew in size and geographic scope, and other festivals were added to the calendar, as well. Officially founded in 1996, AMIS has continued to expand ever since to the global organization it is today. In 2014, the Bassetts officially retired from AMIS, but they still maintain active ties to the organization as consultants.

²³⁵ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

There are several organizations around the world dedicated to supporting different facets of music and music education globally.²³⁶ As an organization, AMIS is most similar to ISME in terms of geographical scope, but the histories of the two organizations are independent of one another and their aims remain different. ISME is concerned about “promoting music education for people of all ages in *all relevant situations throughout the world* [emphasis added],” assisting in the advancement of music education through their work with UNESCO and countries’ national music education organizations.²³⁷ Most English-speaking international schools follow either a British or American curriculum, which are heavily centered around large ensemble music making. It seems that, to make sure that all relevant situations of music education are promoted equally around the world, international schools are not a part of ISME’s aims or scope, since they might influence an imbalanced promotion of British or American styles of music education.²³⁸

ISME brings musicians together from places all over the world and exposes them to different ideas about music and music education. Yet, when they leave a conference, ISME members return to their respective countries and carry on with their mission in music. They also return to their support network, to the friends who already understand their mission and are

²³⁶ Examples include the International Music Council, the International Association for Jazz Education, and the International Federation for Choral Music.

²³⁷ International Society for Music Education, “About ISME,” International Society for Music Education, accessed May 4, 2017, <http://www.isme.org/about>.

²³⁸ It is interesting to note that through McCarthy’s entire 50-year history of ISME, the term “international school” is never used. Marie McCarthy, *Toward a Global Community: The International Society for Music Education, 1953-2003* (International Society for Music Education, 2004), <https://www.isme.org/sites/default/files/documents/ISME%2BHistory%2BBook.pdf>.

willing to help them promote music and music education according to that mission. Though AMIS and ISME are similar in geographic scope, they serve equally important, yet different facets of international music education. To illustrate this point, I will describe by initial encounter with AMIS and how it affected my life as an international school music educator.

The 2014 AMIS Music Educators' Conference in Aberdeen, Scotland was my first experience with AMIS. At the time, I was only one-third of the way into my third year of teaching and my first year as a middle school music teacher at the American International School of Budapest (AISB) in Budapest, Hungary. The conference was also the first professional development event I had attended since finishing my undergraduate degree. As I traveled from the airport to the hotel, I found I was extremely nervous. I was concerned about my lack of experience as a music educator and anxious feeling inadequate in front of my peers.

Prior to working in Budapest, I taught middle school music for two years at a small international school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The elementary, middle, and high school campuses were at three separate buildings across the city. Meetings with my fellow music colleagues were few and far between. We collaborated on two all-school concerts the first year, but the head of the music department became seriously ill in July before the start of my second year and had to move back to the United States. All-school concerts did not happen that second year. Because of the separate campuses and lack of time for collaboration, I often felt that I was the only music teacher at my school. I had a professional development allowance at that school but only used it to pay for an online course since I was not able to find any music education events happening in Asia. In addition to the factors already mentioned, my distrust of the

school's governing board was growing by the day. There were several months my colleagues and I were not paid on time, and the board was not being transparent about the reason for this problem. By the end of my two-year contract, I was more than ready for a change.

I was hired at AISB with the goal of bringing some innovation and energy into the music program. Enrollment in the band program was dwindling, which was affecting the overall middle school schedule. There was also no choral program in the middle or high school beyond an after-school club that met for a few months a year to prepare music for a regional festival. Solving these issues were lofty goals, and I knew I would need help. During a conversation with one of my new music colleagues at AISB in August, I learned about a Music Educators' Conference for international school teachers happening that November. I figured there would be no better place to get help on these issues, so I jumped at the opportunity to attend.

The nervousness had not subsided by the next morning in Aberdeen. In fact, it had become more intense. As I grabbed my breakfast and tried to find a place to sit in the hotel restaurant, I was in awe. I did not know any of these people personally, but I had done some online research ahead of time and knew *about* them. Many of the people I saw around me were veteran teachers from storied international schools of the world. These teachers had the jobs that novice teachers such as myself could only dream of landing. They were legends in the field. Being the stubborn, extroverted person I am, though, I decided to channel that nervousness into something positive. I saw an open seat at one of these "veteran teacher" tables, introduced myself, and asked if I could take the seat. I was instantly welcomed to the table.

About that time, a tall charismatic man in a perfectly tailored suit entered the breakfast room and began greeting the teachers in the room before he grabbed his first cup of coffee. I

recognized his face from the AMIS website; he was Keith Montgomery, the newly appointed Executive Director of AMIS. After exchanging greetings and pleasantries with several people, he made his way to my table. He greeted the others at my table and eventually turned to me:

You must be Kevin. Welcome to AMIS! Thanks for joining us this weekend. We're so glad someone from Budapest is here again. It's been a long time since we've had someone from your school involved. I'm excited to get to know you this weekend. Let's make sure to sit down at some point this weekend and talk about how we can get your school participating in our festivals again.²³⁹

Something about this interaction calmed my nerves. Any anxiousness I had felt about attending the conference prior to that moment was gone. Although it was not stated explicitly, it was as though Mr. Montgomery had just said, "Welcome to the AMIS family." I learned during the conference that the acronym "AMIS" (pronounced "ah-mee") was the French word for "friends," alluding to Mr. and Mrs. Bassett's goal "to make friends through music." The entire weekend was an embodiment of those words: the performances captivated me, the workshops inspired me, and a new group of musical friends suddenly surrounded me. I sat down with Mr. Montgomery at the end of the weekend, and we devised a plan that would get AISB involved in AMIS again and hopefully inspire the administration to start a curricular choral program. I left Aberdeen with a motivation to teach that I had not felt since my first day in the classroom.

When I returned to Budapest, I convinced my administration to host the AMIS European Middle School Honor Girls' Choir Festival during the 2015-2016 school year. After a year of planning and help from my wonderful colleagues at AISB, the event was a great success. Seventy-eight middle school girls came together in Budapest coming from thirteen schools that geographically ranged from Dubai to the Dominican Republic. Over the course of two and a half

²³⁹ Keith Montgomery, personal communication with the author, November 2014.

days, they intensely rehearsed music that they had been preparing in their own schools for months. The weekend culminated with a Saturday evening Gala concert in a packed theater. I was overwhelmed with the beauty of sound that the girls made together, even having to fight back tears as I played in the teacher-staffed rhythm section that was accompanying the choir on the final song, entitled *I Can Feel the Rhythm*. It was an indescribably wonderful experience that I will cherish for years to come.

While I attribute some of the differences in my experiences in Budapest and Ho Chi Minh City to differences in the schools (the schedule, administration, resources, etc.), I think much of the difference comes from finding AMIS. The energy that this organization gave my students, my school, and me is unlike anything I could have fostered alone. I am still an active member of the organization even though I am not currently teaching in an international school because it has had such a profound effect on me.

While my experience with AMIS is only one story, it is far from unique. AMIS-affiliated schools are often isolated in their respective cities. As an example, the closest international school to one of the newest AMIS member schools, the International School of Curitiba, Brazil, is in São Paulo, nearly 300 miles away. AMIS schools all have similar goals of promoting western art music through large ensemble music-making, and AMIS brings these like-minded people together through the honor ensembles and workshops. AMIS is a lifeline for students and teachers in these schools.

No matter how differing opinions may be about issues that arise, every AMIS person I have talked to has been unified in the purpose of “bringing people together through music.” I have heard this sentiment echoed by Mr. Montgomery:

...the most undervalued aspect of AMIS is the network that it provides. The fact that you and I know one another right now. We’re not working on a choral festival. You know music teachers all over the world because of AMIS. Without AMIS, we would not have this network. We wouldn’t all know one another. We wouldn’t be relying on one another, and there’s a lot of power in that. I think it’s the greatest gift that the Bassetts gave us – networking the music teachers all over the world.²⁴⁰

...by students...

...it’s really cool because you get to meet people from different cultures, but we’re all singing the same song and that brings us together...”²⁴¹

...by conductors...

In my first festival in Belgium in 1991...we had just gone through the Gulf Wars, and I remember that the place sort of erupted when Riyadh came in, because nobody thought they would be coming...it was very impactful.

...[the festivals] foster a collaboration between the colleagues brought in to do the festival, the teachers and the students...”²⁴²

...and most of all, by teachers. The most powerful statement towards this sentiment I have found in my research comes from James Temple, a young teacher at the American International School of Bucharest who experienced his first AMIS festival this school year:

²⁴⁰ Montgomery, Interview with the author.

²⁴¹ Association for Music in International Schools, *AMIS 2017 Asian Middle School Honor Boys & Girls Choirs*, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/AMISEducators/videos/1766448703684821/>.

²⁴² Dr. Andre Thomas speaking about his fondest festival memories and why he keeps coming back to conduct AMIS festivals. Andre Thomas, Interview with the author, Telephone, June 2, 2017.

This past week, I had one of the most powerful and impactful experiences of my life. I was lucky to travel with 5 students from my own school to the American School in Dubai for a 3-day honor choir clinic that was hosted by the Association for Music in International Schools, or AMIS. This clinic had 115 students from all over the world come prepared to make wonderful music together. As one. It is that little bit there that so profoundly moved and changed me: as one. Music brings people together. I have always been a subscriber of this widely accepted message. The thing that I never realized until I saw it and experienced it with my own eyes, was just exactly what music can do to people AND what people can do for each other through music. I witnessed a group of kids with countless separate cultures and backgrounds embrace one another. I watched human beings connect on a level so rarely displayed in our society. It so often seems to me that people in the world want to find that which is different about them in order to identify themselves and qualify themselves as superior, inferior, or just that, different. What I saw and what I witnessed was young people embracing that which is different about them and others and using that to connect. To learn. To come together. And you know what? It wasn't some big moment, some epiphany, some light that these young people saw. It was easy. It was simple. It was natural. I watched and listened as kids sang songs from different languages and even songs with lyrics depicting Christian values IN A MUSLIM COUNTRY. There were even songs sang in Arabic and Italian, while not all students were from those countries or shared those countries' values. These young people sang songs encouraging everyone that though we are different, we "hide the same fears" and "cry the same tears." The music was phenomenal. The learning process was evident and one of a kind. But the thing that I will always take away with me from this experience was the connection. The students taught me and showed me life. We divide ourselves. Nothing natural does this. This is something that humans do themselves, and I dare to say it is usually humans that we classify as "adults." Music brings people together, but maybe, just maybe, music (among other activities) serves as an excuse for humans to do that which we so desperately need and that which we so longingly yearn for: to connect.²⁴³

None of this would have ever been possible without the Bassetts. Before them, nothing like AMIS existed. International school teachers, such as myself, would still be stranded on the islands that are our schools. Drawing inspiration from their international teaching career and

²⁴³ James Temple, "Facebook Post," January 23, 2017.

honor ensemble experiences in their formative years, the Bassetts created and fostered an organization that connected international school music teachers and students like no other organization had done before.

Suggestions for Future Research

Heller and Wilson caution that one of the challenges of this type of research is that the researcher “makes decisions about what is important and what is not on the bases of his own experience and his perception of the needs and interests of the reader.”²⁴⁴ Deciding which perspectives to include and which to leave out is always a challenge. The AMIS Music Educators’ Facebook Group has a plethora of information that was not included in the final narrative. Advances in technology have changed how AMIS teachers can communicate. Future research into the organization could include a full content analysis of the group page to better understand how AMIS teachers are interacting with each other.

As a former teacher at an AMIS-affiliated school and a current individual member of AMIS, I tried to use these affiliations to arrange interviews with retired teachers who were affiliated with AMIS. For one reason or another, none of those interviews ever took place. These are perspectives that I believe would have been valuable to the narrative. Also, although it was not a feasible option for the current study, future research concerning AMIS should consider adding student perspectives to the data collected.

As alluded to in the introduction, AMIS is steadily growing, and I believe there is a growing discrepancy among teachers concerning who AMIS serves. Future research to address

²⁴⁴ George N. Heller and Bruce D. Wilson, “Historical Research in Music Education: A Prolegomenon,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 69 (1982): 3.

this issue should consider investigating the AMIS mission statement and how the statement is understood by all those involved in AMIS. Perspectives investigated should include the students, teachers, Executive Council, and school administrators. Qualitative research in this area might aid AMIS in fostering a more comprehensive and unified self-identity among those it serves.

Conclusions

International school culture and effective education through music create unique opportunities for educating students to be better global citizens who are accepting of humans across the world, regardless of their race, upbringing, beliefs, or values. Little research has been conducted on when, why or how music education happens in international schools. By connecting international school music teachers across the globe, AMIS is unique in its scope and influence within music education, and it has created a clear avenue through which to continue these investigations. It is clear, however, from researching the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Bassett and the music organization they created, that music-making experiences can be used to teach people to connect with one another instead of isolating themselves.

AMIS is a thriving international family that creates musical experiences in international schools that would otherwise be unavailable to them. It is a professional network for teachers, unique learning opportunities for music students, and a promoter of music and music education in international schools around the globe. Because of the efforts of the Bassetts, AMIS champions excellence in music education and fosters global citizenship by “bringing hands together through music.”²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Bassett and Bassett, Interview with the author.

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